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THE MODERN VAMPIRE PHENOMENON PARADOX:
SIMULTANEOUS CONTRADICTIONS AND UNLIMITED LIMITS

by

JESSICA MARIE LANDERS

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

The Modern Vampire Phenomenon Paradox:
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JESSICA MARIE LANDERS

Thesis Director:

Ed Cohen

Vampires have recently established an extremely visible space in popular culture, especially among women. There are a myriad of book series, television shows, films, and more that are inundating popular culture with the vampire. The vampires portrayed in this fad, however, are not the same monsters vampires once were. The most important question for my research concerns how and why the modern vampire has contributed to the recent explosion in popularity of vampire fiction. Using texts such as the books and films of *The Twilight Saga* and the television series *The Vampire Diaries* and *True Blood*, I address the modern vampire assemblage as it breaks down binaries that are simultaneously restabilized by a foundation of heterosexuality. I explore the fans of modern vampires as they attempt to collapse reality and fantasy in their attempts to make modern vampires a reality. I trace the major changes that have occurred within vampire fiction in the portrayal of the vampire, from the original inherently evil, monstrous vampires to the modern vampires who choose to act against their “nature” in motivation of a good, humanitarian existence. While early representations of vampires served to draw strict boundaries between monsters, humans, and animals, modern vampires

confuse the borders surrounding these beings, becoming a multiplicity of hybrids. These hybrids are provocative to fans who are able to use them to develop alternative spaces of identities in which they can question the legitimacies of binaries, categories, and the conceptualization of the human. Despite the potential for nuance, these destabilized elements are simultaneously recuperated through the reinforcement of heterosexuality. Thus, even while modern vampire fiction succeeds in providing audiences with blurred binaries and hybrids, any possible complexity is canceled out by the upholding of the foundation of heterosexuality. In order for the modern vampire phenomenon to occur, however, all of these elements must be present in modern vampire fiction. Thus the modern vampire phenomenon is constituted by contradictions that only when executed in perfect harmony do they produce the ultimate opportunity for a phenomenon such as this to occur.

Dedication

For Andrew, all my love

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INTRODUCTION

Modern vampires have recently established an extremely visible space in popular culture, especially among women in the West. They are a media assemblage of books, films, television shows, fans, commodities, identity, binaries, and heterosexuality, and they are an assemblage of border-troubling that allows for both tension and comfort simultaneously. Fans are able to engage with binary disturbing and hybrids safely as it is recuperated by the reinforcement of one key element – heterosexuality.

Modern vampires initially appear to challenge and shift prominent binaries such as human/animal and human/monster. Because modern vampires are no longer definitively monstrous, they often question their identities and never quite belong in any one single category. However, ultimately, modern vampires recuperate and restabilize these disturbed binaries by never troubling the foundational category of heterosexuality. Tension between categories and binaries are especially evident only because they are founded on the safety of the reinforcement of heterosexuality.

Modern vampires present to their audiences imaginative forms that provide them with hybrid categories. These hybrid categories are provocative and seemingly progressive but they function as the ultimate reinforcement of how to behave correctly as a heterosexual. This creates a tension in the assemblage that allows people to visit new forms of identification that are completely safe. Although these disturbed binaries can initially be troubling to modern vampire fans, they are able to remain feeling safe through the reaffirming of other binaries, primarily heterosexuality. Hybridity is resolved through the emphasis in modern vampire fiction on heterosexuality.

Modern vampires present the category of the human as the core of their existences. Fans of modern vampires are able to entertain the question of what it means to be a human at this historical moment. Affectively, they recognize that there is a problem with binaries that define the human – rarely does anyone fit into any one category entirely. Through this recognition, they are attracted to modern vampires’ shifting of categories that allows them to entertain the possibilities of binary disturbing yet fundamentally remain comfortable through its reaffirming of heterosexuality.

The project will be written in three chapters with an introduction and conclusion. This will include a background discussion of popular culture vampire texts, including *The Twilight Saga* books and films, *The Vampire Diaries* television series, the *True Blood* television series, and other minor films, books, and television series. The three main chapters of this project will provide a discourse analysis of the common themes that exist in representations of the modern vampire and a discussion of binaries, animals, monstrosity, humanity, hybridity, and heterosexuality and how these elements work together to both promote and maintain the popularity of the modern vampire. I will primarily engage with *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Patricia MacCormack’s chapter entitled “Unnatural Alliances” in the collection *Deleuze and Queer Theory*, and Bruno Latour’s *We Have Never Been Modern*.

Chapter one will function as an introduction to the modern vampire phenomenon assemblage by using Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s theory of assemblage. In an age in which so much is or seems out of control (war, global warming, natural disasters, terrorism, technology), perhaps it is logical that these modern vampires, whose entire life

purposes revolve around their abilities to stay in control, would become so popular.

Consumerism has been hypothesized as the main catalyst for modern vampires, both metaphorically and literally. As the modern vampire continues to consume the minds of its fans, the fans continue to consume the vampire and each other in a range of ways.

Chapter one will focus on how modern vampire fans have blurred boundaries between reality and fantasy and the ways in which instances of the modern vampire have found their way in popular culture through Lady Gaga, *South Park*, *Glee*, and *CSI*.

In Chapter Two, I will engage in a discussion of animals, monsters, and humans. I will explore how these factors are evident in the modern vampire and how they work together to make the modern vampire different from historical portrayals of the vampire. Modern vampires exist on the fringes of being human/nonhuman, dead/alive, and they frequently compare their actions and their identities to those of animals and monsters. Modern vampires sacrifice their true desires in pursuit of a higher purpose: to remain as close to humanity as possible, despite no longer being human. While attempting to draw strict borders around what it means to be a monster, an animal, or a human, modern vampires actually serve to confuse these boundaries, blurring them into a multiplicity of hybrids. Categories are no longer applicable to modern vampires because they do not fit into any one category. I will use Deleuze and Guattari to discuss the multiplicity of becomings and “Unnatural Alliances” by Patricia MacCormack to engage with notions of hybrids, vampires, animals, and monsters.

In Chapter Three, I will address the ways in which heterosexuality serves to essentially undermine all of the instances of hybridity and binary transgression in order to offer fans a “happy ending,” so to speak. It cannot be ignored that the largest group of

fans of the modern vampire are women. In literally every portrayal of the modern vampire, the plot revolves around the male vampire and the female human who fall in love. These heterosexual romances reinforce gender boundaries and heteronormativity, reminding female consumers how to correctly behave as heterosexual women. These fans engage with the modern vampire commodity by relating to one another through their identifications as heterosexuals. Furthermore, because the modern vampire does not challenge the foundation of heterosexuality, the presentation of hybrids and binary blurring are attractive ways for fans to explore the possibilities of border troubling without actually doing so. I will use Bruno Latour's *We Have Never Been Modern* to engage with contradictions.

I will also explore in the fourth and final book of *The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn*, primarily the birth scene and the plot of the book in general. The birth scene epitomizes the modern vampire phenomenon by providing clear instances of hybridity and heterosexuality. Although hybridity is the focus of this graphic scene, ultimately heterosexuality is what wraps up all of the loose ends and allows for the book to culminate in a satisfactory ending for fans. Hybridity and the modern vampire are always in a state of becoming, which means that the existence of the hybrid is always being negotiated. *Breaking Dawn*'s effect is twofold, as the goal of its plot is to convince a multiplicity of characters that a hybrid child is not a monster. Thus, its second goal is to convince the reader that hybrids are not monstrous. This is achieved by providing heterosexuality as the solution to resolve all instances of hybridity.

The conclusion of this project will provide a synthesis of the introduction and three chapters and attempt to answer the main question finally asked in chapter three:

How and why has the modern vampire contributed to the recent explosion in popularity of vampire fiction? By revisiting the characteristics and themes of the modern vampire and the recent inundation of vampires, my conclusion will create at least a partial illustration of how modern vampires have become such a phenomenon. By addressing these issues, this thesis can add to general understandings of how the human is and is not defined and how heterosexuality serves to resolve hybridity.

CHAPTER ONE

The Modern Vampire Assemblage: Fangs, Fans, and the Coalescence of Reality and Fantasy

This wasn't a choice between you and Jacob. It was a choice between who I should be and who I am. I've always felt out of step – like, literally stumbling through my life. I've never felt normal, because I'm not normal. I don't want to be. I've had to face death, and loss, and pain in your world but I've also never felt stronger – like, more real, more myself – because it's my world, too. It's where I belong.

- Bella Swan, *Eclipse* (2010)

The affective response in popular culture to modern vampires has been one of phenomenal proportions and leads me to this question: How and why has the modern vampire contributed to the recent explosion in popularity of vampire fiction? In this chapter, I will particularly focus on *The Twilight Saga*, which seems to be the catalyst for the popularity of modern vampires. Though *The Twilight Saga* is not the first recent instance of good, “vegetarian” vampires,¹ which I will discuss later, it seems to have invigorated portrayals of good vampires and has initiated, encouraged, and maintained the current vampire trend in popular culture. *The Twilight Saga*'s trajectory from author Stephenie Meyer's dream² to novel to saga to films has progressed at a fast pace,³ with women of all ages falling in love with the romantic teenage love story. In light of *Twilight*'s success, other modern vampire tales such as television series *The Vampire Diaries* and *True Blood*, both of which are based on book series, have also gained popularity. Although many critics have already written about *The Twilight Saga*'s and other modern vampire fictions' (many) incidences of sexism, racism, and classism, no one has truly examined how this vampire phenomenon has taken place and why it

¹ The first book in *The Vampire Diaries* book series was published in 1991, and the first book in *The Southern Vampire Mysteries* (later to become the television series *True Blood*) was published in 2001.

² Stephanie Meyer claims that the idea for *Twilight* came to her in a dream (“Twilight” 1).

³ The *Twilight* saga phenomenon has evolved in only 5 years, since 2005, when *Twilight* was published.

continues to gain popularity. Why do modern vampires produce such sensation and contagion? Why now? Why vampires? Why these vampires?

The intention of this chapter is to address these questions using Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's theories of assemblage, affect, and line of flight, while also utilizing Amit Rai's concept of the media assemblage and affective contagion. Initially, I will address modern vampire fans and the phenomenon itself. Later in this chapter, I will discuss aspects of the modern vampire in popular culture and make connections to the modern vampire fans. This chapter will largely explore the modern vampire phenomenon through *The Twilight Saga* by examining an assemblage of audience members, contagion, corporeal reality, becoming, and hybridity.

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari describe an assemblage as "precisely this increase in the dimensions of a multiplicity that necessarily changes in nature as it expands its connections. There are no points or positions in a rhizome, such as those found in a structure, tree, or root. There are only lines."⁴ An assemblage is a multiplicity of connected lines, not structured points or positions. Deleuze and Guattari explain, "An assemblage, in its multiplicity, necessarily acts on semiotic flows, material flows, and social flows simultaneously..."⁵ The multiplicity of connected lines act together with flows, rather than engage separately. Deleuze and Guattari differentiate an assemblage as consisting of both a vertical and horizontal axis. On the horizontal axis, an assemblage consists of two segments, one of content, and one of expression, and is a "machinic assemblage" as well as a "collective assemblage of enunciation."⁶ A machinic

⁴ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p. 8.

⁵ Ibid., p. 22.

⁶ Ibid., p. 88.

assemblage is comprised “of bodies, of actions and passions, an intermingling of bodies reacting to one another,” while a collective assemblage of enunciation consists “of acts and statements, of incorporeal transformations attributed to bodies.”⁷ On the vertical axis, “the assemblage has both *territorial sides*, or reterritorialized sides, which stabilize it, and *cutting edges of deterritorialization*, which carry it away.”⁸ *The Twilight Saga* consists of the content of the novels and films that set the basis for the modern vampire phenomenon and that determines the expression of the modern vampire fans; hence, the modern vampire machinic assemblage creates and shapes its collective assemblage of enunciation. The modern vampire phenomenon succeeds in (re)territorializing patriarchy as well as deterritorializing patriarchy in a multiplicity of ways that I will discuss.

In Amit Rai’s words, “I begin with the deterritorialization of sensation, audiences, and genre”⁹ within the modern vampire culture. Modern vampires consist of a machinic assemblage that is marketed as young adult fiction within the genres of romance and fantasy, consisting of stories about teenagers and supernatural occurrences. Despite the fact that modern vampire fiction often involves teenage characters, modern vampires are enjoyed by teenagers and adults alike, mainly consisting of a female audience and producing the same or similar fanatical affective responses in both the teenage and adult fans. Modern vampires are a media assemblage of books, television series, films, fanatics, women (adults and teenagers), romance, the desire for a tangible, corporeal reality, and identity, all of which work together to produce and proliferate the vampire phenomenon. I will discuss all of this further.

⁷ Ibid., p. 88.

⁸ Ibid., p. 88.

⁹ Amit Rai, *Untimely Bollywood: Globalization and India’s New Media Assemblage* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), p. 12.

The popularity of modern vampires is undeniable. The third film in *The Twilight Saga* film franchise, *Eclipse*, which was released on June 30, 2010, set the record for the highest amount of money made at the box office for both a Wednesday premiere and a midnight screening, exceeding the previous record set by the previous *Twilight* film in the series, *New Moon*.¹⁰ HBO's *True Blood*, based on *The Southern Vampire Mysteries* novels by Charlaine Harris, debuted in 2008 and is now HBO's second most-watched television series ever, second only to *The Sopranos*.¹¹ The CW's *The Vampire Diaries* television series, based on *The Vampire Diaries* novels by L.J. Smith, premiered in 2009 and drew the largest audience of any other television series on The CW Network since the network began in 2006.¹² *True Blood* has been renewed for a fourth season,¹³ *The Vampire Diaries* is in the midst of its second season, and *Breaking Dawn*, the fourth installment in *The Twilight Saga* film series, will be broken down into two films that will premiere in 2011 and 2012, respectively.¹⁴ Clearly, there is no sign of the modern vampire trend weakening anytime soon.

¹⁰ Christine Kearny, "'Eclipse' Takes \$30 Million Bite from Midnight Box Office," *Reuters*, 1 July 2010, <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE65T4Q520100701>, (8 Nov. 2010), p. 1.

¹¹ Benjamin Toff, "Victories for NBC, MTV, and 'True Blood,'" *The New York Times*, 15 Sept. 2009, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/16/arts/television/16arts-VICTORIESFOR_BRF.html?_r=1, (8 Nov. 2010), p. 1.

¹² Carina MacKenzie, "'Vampire Diaries' Star Nina Dobrev on Elena's Look-Alike Dilemma and More," *Los Angeles Times*, 21 Jan. 2010, <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/showtracker/2010/01/vampire-diaries-star-nina-dobrev.html>, (8 Nov. 2010), p. 1.

¹³ Robert Seidman, "'True Blood' Renewed by HBO for a Fourth Season," *TV by the Numbers*, 21 June 2010, <http://tvbythenumbers.zap2it.com/2010/06/21/true-blood-renewed-by-hbo-for-a-fourth-season/54804>, (8 Nov. 2010), p. 1.

¹⁴ Charlotte Pike, "The Twilight Saga 'Breaking Dawn' Split into Two Films," *The News Gals*, 11 June 2010, <http://www.thenewsgals.com/the-twilight-saga-%E2%80%9Cbeyaking-dawn%E2%80%9D-split-into-two-films/775/>, (8 Nov. 2010), p. 1.

Despite being U.S. produced, *The Twilight Saga* has expanded to global proportions with translations in at least 38 languages¹⁵ since the first book was published in 2005. *The Twilight Saga* phenomenon has exploded with excessive amounts of *Twilight* materials that are available all over the world.¹⁶ *Twilight* fans have proven that producing *Twilight* merchandise is an immensely lucrative field, purchasing merchandise that ranges from underwear to key chains to wall murals. Rai explains, “The emergent property...of the globalized assemblage of new media and bodies is the property to produce overflow itself, as the potentiality of all forms of excess becomes a mode of self-organizing the assemblage itself.”¹⁷ The *Twilight* and thus modern vampire phenomenon is organized by a culture of excess in which nothing is ever satisfying, most specifically the excessive fanaticism of fans and their demand for more. Even the *Twilight* books themselves are filled with descriptions of excessive adjectives, modifiers, and emotions. *The Twilight Saga* culture has spawned lines of merchandise, websites, films, conventions, tourism, blogs, vlogs (video blogs), and more with no sign of this excessive fandom waning.

The Twilight Saga phenomenon constitutes an enormous amount of affective labor that contributes significantly to the maintenance and proliferation of the phenomenon. In *The Witch’s Flight: The Cinematic, the Black Femme, and the Image of Common Sense*, Kara Keeling argues, “Affectivity must be understood as designating a form of labor necessary to survive in that reality and integral to that reality’s

¹⁵ Hala Khalaf, “‘Twilight’ Arrives in the Arabic World,” *The National*, 26 Jun. 2009, <http://www.thenational.ae/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20090626/NATIONAL/706259813>, (8 Nov. 2009), p. 1.

¹⁶ Julia Carusillo, “The 30 Most Disturbing Twilight Products,” *io9*, 19 Nov. 2009, <http://io9.com/5407713/the-30-most-disturbing-twilight-products/gallery/>, (4 Dec. 2009).

¹⁷ Rai, p. 79.

(re)production.”¹⁸ Intimate involvement in the modern vampire phenomenon is laborious – maintaining a website, creating new merchandise, participating in events, watching the films, reading the books, etc., which, as I argued above, also constitutes the culture of excess and constant demand for more. Most of the *Twilight* fans openly admit to having read each of the four 500-800 page books in the saga multiple times, with some fans confessing to having read each of the books ten times or more.¹⁹ This affective labor is integral to the sustainment and proliferation of the modern vampire phenomenon.

The modern vampire phenomenon consists of an assemblage of bodies interacting in ways that aspire for the corporeal reality of vampires. When I refer to “corporeal reality,” I mean that fans of modern vampires desperately wish for modern vampires to be “real” and often take steps to blur the boundaries between reality and fantasy, taking it into their own hands to create a vampiric reality. With modern vampires no longer constituting monsters but rather romantic, attractive superheroes, it is not surprising that fans have begun to wish for vampires to be “real.” While it is true that people often wish for certain fantasies to exist in “real” life, the books, television series, films, and more are not enough for vampire fans who desperately desire that vampires be “real.” Countless fan websites and Facebook groups with titles such as “I want Edward Cullen to be Real” or “I get sad when I remember Edward, Jacob, and Twilight aren’t real” are filled with comments from readers wishing that Edward Cullen and vampires actually existed.²⁰

¹⁸ Kara Keeling, *The Witch’s Flight: The Cinematic, the Black Femme, and the Image of Common Sense*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), p. 25.

¹⁹ “How many times have you read the Twilight books?” Facebook, <http://www.facebook.com/topic.php?uid=8526405673&topic=20632>, (6 Dec. 2009).

²⁰ “I want Edward Cullen to be real,” Facebook, <http://www.facebook.com/search/?q=i+want+edward+cullen+to+be+real&init=quick#/group.php?gid=24090739725&ref=search&sid=6802576.873373258..1>, (2 Dec. 2009).

According to *Time* magazine, “people do not want to just read Meyer's books; they want to climb inside them and live there.”²¹ These same fans are flocking to Forks, Washington, the setting of *The Twilight Saga*, for no reason other than to explore the town where *Twilight* is “real,” even though the movies were not even filmed there.²² Tourism in Forks has increased 600% due to the popularity of the Twilight books²³ as “fans from all over the world want to come and see the *very real town* where their favorite characters met and fell in love” (italics mine).²⁴ Deleuze and Guattari write,

There is no longer a tripartite division between a field of reality (the world) and a field of representation (the book) and a field of subjectivity (the author). Rather, an assemblage establishes connections between certain multiplicities drawn from each of these orders, so that a book has no sequel nor the world as its object nor one or several objects as its subject.²⁵

Modern vampires have taken on properties of the rhizome, establishing lines of flight that connect reality (the world), representation (the books, television series, and/or films), and the field of subjectivity (Stephenie Meyer herself and the multiplicity of vampire fans who contribute to the phenomenon) in ways that make it difficult if not impossible to separate one from another. Thus it seems logical that vampire fans now actively aspire for a corporeal reality of vampires in which the rhizome designates no separation from the fantasy and reality.

“I get sad when I remember Edward, Jacob, and Twilight aren’t real,” *Facebook*, <http://www.facebook.com/pages/I-get-sad-when-I-remember-Edward-Jacob-and-Twilight-arent-real/177693804951?ref=search&sid=6802576.2980355821..1>, (2 Dec. 2009).

²¹ Lev Grossman, “It’s Twilight in America: The Vampire Saga,” *Time Magazine*, 23 Nov. 2009, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1938712,00.html>, (23 Nov. 2009).

²² Stephanie Cox, “Twilight Movie Filmed in Portland, Oregon,” *Suite101*, 26 Nov. 2008, http://graphicnovelscomics.suite101.com/article.cfm/twilight_movie_filmed_in_portland_oregon, (26 Nov. 2009).

²³ Lesley Peterson, “Travel for Twilight Fans,” *Ruba*, http://www.ruba.com/guide/Travel_for_Twi_hards-Lesley, (26 Nov. 2009).

²⁴ “A Twilight Travel Guide to Forks, Washington,” <http://twilight.inforks.com/>, (26 Nov. 2009).

²⁵ Deleuze and Guattari, p. 23.

When *Twilight* culture was disturbed by the announcement that the film industry would be making the books into films, *Twilight* fans had mixed opinions. In fact, “the more rabid the fan base, the more outright cruel the comments [about the film].”²⁶ They criticized the choice of actors and seemed fearful that the films would not do justice to the book series. *Twilight* fans, however, managed to reclaim this film event by projecting their desire for *Twilight* to have a corporeal reality onto the film, particularly the actors in the films. Kara Keeling writes,

Deleuze’s theories of the cinematic...[allow] for a nuanced and critical understanding of film as part of reality, rather than as a reflection or representation of it, and of the dominance of cinematic processes in making sense of the world for those whose sensory-motor schemata have been habituated by film.²⁷

Thus, in accordance with Deleuze, the *Twilight* films are not just representations of the books or the *Twilight* culture; they are part of what constitutes *Twilight*’s reality. This helps *The Twilight Saga* fans make sense of *Twilight* as well as boost their need for what I have been calling a desire for “corporeal reality.” In other words, as I will discuss further, modern vampire fans desperately desire for vampires to be “real,” and they participate in attempting to establish its reality through a multiplicity of ways – dressing up as vampires, biting others and drinking their blood, confusing the actors in the films with the characters they play, and more. The process of the *Twilight* films bringing the book series to “life” cements fans’ desires for *Twilight* to be something tangible and “real.”

As a result of their desire for a *Twilight* corporeal reality, *Twilight* fans are determined to prove that the lead actors of the films, Kristen Stewart (Bella) and Robert

²⁶ “Initial *Twilight* Fan Reaction Not so Warm for Pattinson, Stewart, and Gathegi,” *Reelz Channel*, 9 Nov. 2008, <http://www.reelzchannel.com/movie-news/2158/initial-twilight-fan-reaction-not-so-warm-for-pattinson-stewart-and-gathegi>, (23 Nov. 2009).

²⁷ Keeling, p. 5.

Pattinson (Edward), are in a relationship, which would somehow prove that *Twilight* is “real.” MTV even aired a special show documenting all of the potential “evidence” that proves Stewart and Pattinson are dating.²⁸ Despite the negative film reviews of the *Twilight*, *New Moon*, and *Eclipse* films and thus the potential that *Twilight* fans might be unsatisfied with the films, *Twilight* fans continue to flock to these films, breaking records in the process and praising the films because it does not matter how good or bad they are; the films represent the corporeal reality of *Twilight*, which is more important than how well the film was made. *The Twilight Saga* phenomenon constitutes a collective assemblage of enunciation through its fans’ projection of the books’ incorporeal characters onto the films, which contain a version of a corporeal reality through the bodies of the actors.

Moviephone is currently holding a contest to search for the “Biggest ‘Twilight’ Fan” via videos on YouTube.²⁹ Amid the many videos posted, one in particular stands out for its excessive fanaticism. Anita, user no1fanpire on YouTube, describes how *Twilight* is her “reason for existence” while standing in a room surrounded by *Twilight* posters and full-size cardboard body cutouts of the actors in the *Twilight* films.³⁰ She explains, “I’m in love with it because it’s the world I live in and the air I breathe.” She will “literally take a bullet for any member of the cast” and believes that “this is more than an obsession – it’s a way of life.” Although Anita may be a bit more fanatic than the average *Twilight* fan, her merging of reality and fantasy is quite striking. She believes she lives in the

²⁸ Adam Rosenberg, “Robert Pattinson And Kristen Stewart Relationship Explored in ‘Love Bites,’” *MTV Movie Blogs*, 18 Nov. 2009, <http://moviesblog.mtv.com/2009/11/18/robert-pattinson-and-kristen-stewart-relationship-explored-in-love-bites/>, (23 Nov. 2009), p. 1.

²⁹ Moviephone Staff, “Moviephone’s Biggest ‘Twilight’ Fan Search: Submit Your Video!” *Moviephone*, 8 Nov. 2010, <http://blog.moviephone.com/2010/11/08/biggest-twilight-fan-search/>, (8 Nov. 2010), p. 1.

³⁰ No1fanpire, “Biggest Twilight Fan,” *YouTube*, 11 Nov. 2010, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JmHWT177SAM&feature=player_embedded, (15 Nov. 2010).

fictional world of *Twilight*, while at the same time she is willing to die for a member of the film cast. She claims that *The Twilight Saga* is not just a hobby or interest but “a way of life.” She does not even attempt to distinguish between reality and fantasy and in fact revels in the confusion. The spaces for new forms of identification and binary breaking created by modern vampire fiction is thrilling to *Twilight* fans who use those spaces to merge reality and fantasy in attempts to make fictional modern vampire narratives reality.

A complication of this space in which reality and fantasy are blurred involves the young fans who appeal to the actor Robert Pattinson and ask him to bite them because they want to become vampires.³¹ Pattinson claims that girls have also scratched their necks until they were bleeding and subsequently informed him that they did it for him.³² A recent article published by JoNel Aleccia for MSNBC revealed that parents and health officials are becoming concerned with the number of teens who are drinking blood or letting their partner drink their blood.³³ Dr. Orly Avitzur is quoted in the article as saying, “These are kids who think they are real vampires.”³⁴ While some have argued that blood exchanges of any kind are nothing new among teens or adults, it is important not that they are doing it by why they are doing it now – because they want to be vampires and in their attempts to emulate vampires, they are making vampires “real.” Modern vampire fans are attempting to create their own reality of *Twilight* through any means necessary, including physically hurting themselves and/or others.

³¹ Catriona Wightman, “Pattinson: ‘Fans ask me to bite them,’” *Digital Spy*, 15 Nov. 2009, <http://www.digitalspy.com/movies/news/a186954/pattinson-fans-ask-me-to-bite-them.html>, (23 Nov. 2009), p. 1.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 1.

³³ JoNel Aleccia, “Love bites: Teens, stop sucking each other’s blood or you’re grounded!” *The Body Odd on msnbc.com*, 24 Sept. 2010, <http://bodyodd.msnbc.msn.com/news/2010/09/23/5166992-love-bites-teens-stop-sucking-each-others-blood-or-youre-grounded>, (6 Oct. 2010), p. 1.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

While Rai discusses “potentializing excesses of film culture as sites for mapping this cinema’s contagious multiplicities,” I want to explore the modern vampire assemblage’s excesses and its “functional connectivities as well as its evolving capacities to affect and be affected through its proximate populations.”³⁵ The modern vampire assemblage of excess is an important contributor to its affective contagion. The modern vampire media assemblage consists of an assemblage of excess involving a multiplicity of affects such as contagion and addiction discourse. Rai continues,

The ontology of duration suggests that as media habituations evolve over time and across populations, mutations and variations (excess) spontaneously form their own trajectories (self-organization) that may become the starting point for a general phase transition...of the media assemblage itself.³⁶

In other words, the modern vampire phenomenon’s evolution is organized by its culture of excess, which is shaped by vampire fans and their assemblage of contagion, shame, and addiction discourse affects that work together in order to organize and proliferate the entire phenomenon.

Rai explains Bollywood film culture in terms of contagion, which he explains “as an exuberant devotion infecting bodies by virtue of their promiscuous mixing.”³⁷

Although Rai is describing Bollywood film culture, contagion can also be applied to the modern vampire trend, which is increasingly described in terms of drug and disease discourse, frequently referred to as an “addiction,” with *Twilight* fans referring to *Twilight* as a “craving,” “literary crack,” “obsessive Cullen disorder (OCD)” or a “textually transmitted disease.”³⁸ On a question-and-answer website, countless members

³⁵ Rai, p. 12.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 13.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 57.

³⁸ “TwiHard,” *Urban Dictionary*, <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=TwiHard>, (23 Nov. 2009), p. 1.

ask questions such as “How do I get rid of my *Twilight* addiction?” while expressing concern over their level of “addiction” to the book series.³⁹ Robert Pattinson, the lead actor who plays Edward in the *Twilight* films, described *Twilight* as a “virus,”⁴⁰ while Megan Tingley, Stephenie Meyer’s editor at Little, Brown, and Company observed that “Stephenie’s fans are *rabid*”⁴¹ (italics mine). *Twilight* fans utilize disease discourse as a way of explaining their level of devotion to *Twilight*, which is often considered excessive by non-*Twilight* fans. Instead of using a discourse that implies total responsibility for an obsession, disease discourse provides an excuse for “rabid” *Twilight* fans (i.e. “*Twilight* has ‘infected’ me! It’s not my fault that I’m so infatuated with it!”) that they can use to explain or rationalize their “habit.”

Marsha Sutton of the *San Diego News Network* wrote about a friend of hers who said “she was handed the book by a friend who pushed it on her like a drug dealer.”⁴² A colleague of mine referred to what she (jokingly) called “black market dealings” of *Twilight* books at her place of work. In *Touched by a Vampire: Discovering the Hidden Messages in the Twilight Saga* (2009), author Beth Felker Jones explains, “Desire for the one you love is compared to a desire for substances that hook people, causing them to

³⁹ “How to get rid of my Twilight addiction?” *Yahoo! Answers*, <http://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20081129200941AAbamTg>, (23 Nov. 2009).

“How do I get rid of my twilight addiction?” *Yahoo! Answers*, <http://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20081230081833AAhZIQB>, (23 Nov. 2009).

“HELP! I’m addicted to Twilight!!?” *Yahoo! Answers*, <http://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20080505143653AA3WRPI>, (23 Nov. 2009).

⁴⁰ “Pattinson: Twilight is a virus,” *This Is Lancashire*, 12 Nov. 2009, http://www.thisislancashire.co.uk/uk_national_entertainment/4734753.Pattinson_Twilight_is_a_virus/, (23 Nov. 2009).

⁴¹ Megan Irwin, “Charmed,” *Phoenix New Times*, 11 July 2007, <http://www.phoenixnewtimes.com/2007-07-12/news/charmed/>, (23 Nov. 2009).

⁴² Marsha Sutton, “‘Twilight’ helps keeps adults in step with teen culture,” *San Diego News Network*, 23 Nov. 2009, <http://www.sdn.com/sandiego/2009-11-23/education/education-commentary/twilight-helps-keep-adults-in-step-with-teen-culture>, (4 Dec. 2009), p. 1.

react viscerally, to want nothing else in life but to possess and to consume.”⁴³ Not only are modern vampire fans “infected” by *Twilight* and other vampire fiction, they are also “addicted” to them. This disease and addiction discourse functions to account for possession and consumption, two core desires involved both within the modern vampire trend as well as in the fans’ aspiration for a corporeal reality of vampires. “To possess” and “to consume” can apply not only to the characters within the *Twilight* saga but also to the “rabid” fans who utilize this attitude to attempt to “possess” a corporeal reality of vampires as well as to “consume” the multiplicity of vampire resources and merchandise that now exists.

Modern vampire fiction itself also contains references to drug or addiction discourse. In *The Twilight Saga*, Edward describes his and his family’s choice to drink the blood of only animals as opposed to humans as containing “temptation” and references falling “off the wagon” in terms of failing to adhere to the rules of the coven.⁴⁴ He also compares his predicament with Bella (that of wanting to drink her blood) to an alcoholic in a bar and whether that alcoholic could resist the temptation. He even refers to Bella as his “brand of heroin.”⁴⁵ In *The Vampire Diaries*, Stefan abstains from human blood not only for moral reasons but because he fears that if he consumes human blood he will not be able to stop. Damon, Stefan’s brother and a vampire, explains, “Stefan on human blood, Elena – he’ll do anything, he’ll say anything, because he’s not gonna wanna stop.”⁴⁶ By acting out these addictions in “real” life, vampire fans take another

⁴³ Beth Felker Jones, *Touched by a Vampire: Discovering the Hidden Messages in the Twilight Saga*, (Colorado Springs: Multnomah Books, 2009), p. 35.

⁴⁴ Stephanie Meyer, *Twilight*, (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2005), p. 268.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 268.

⁴⁶ *The Vampire Diaries*, “Under Control,” dir. David Von Ancken, writ. Barbie Kligman & Andrew Chambliss, The CW, April 15. 2010.

step toward making vampirism a reality. Modern vampire fiction thus works through addiction to blur the lines between dependency/independency, control/powerlessness, and passion/indifference. While the modern vampires refer to blood as a potential addiction, modern vampire fans refer to vampire fiction itself as an addiction. Instead of perceiving feelings of addiction as negative affects, modern vampire fans interpret addiction as a sense of passion, believing that a loss of control with modern vampire fiction is a positive experience. These feelings of excess contribute to fanaticism and continue to cause fans to be unable to be satiated.

Rai also explores how “cinema proliferated as through affective contagion, the shock of sensation catching on and becoming population-wide habit.”⁴⁷ With the biggest *Twilight* fans referring to themselves as “Twihards,”⁴⁸ these “serious [and] obsessive readers of the *Twilight* saga”⁴⁹ organize a copious amount of ways to connect with other Twihards, through events such as Twi-Con, the now main annual convention for *Twilight* fans to gather together.⁵⁰ Through this contagious multiplicity and “sticky symbiosis,”⁵¹ people unfamiliar with *Twilight* gain a desire to learn more about what appears to be some kind of pop culture utopia, thus becoming “infected” through the affective contagion that is produced as a result of the sensations and perceptions of the Twihards. Contagion is, according to Rai, “not only an image but also the key mode of assembling this open whole.”⁵² Contagion connects with the use of the disease discourse as not only an excuse for Twihards but also a way of explaining the “spread” of *Twilight*. Without

⁴⁷ Rai, p. 56.

⁴⁸ “TwiHard,” *Urbandictionary.com*, <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Twihard>, (23 Nov. 2009).

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ “TwiCon,” *TwiCon.org*, <http://www.twicon.org/>, (23 Nov. 2009).

⁵¹ Rai defines this through what Baruch Spinoza refers to as “relations of motion.” See Rai 12.

⁵² Rai, p. 57.

this ability of *Twilight*'s extreme fandom from being able to "spread" to other people, *Twilight*'s popularity would not be such a phenomenon. Instead, *Twilight* fans continue to create events that not only escalate Twihard culture but also induce new *Twilight* "addicts" who become curious about this phenomenon that ignites such sensation. Twihards, already "infected" by the series, are often the ones responsible for passing on the series to those whom will later also become Twihards. Some Twihards, in fact, refuse to speak to friends or family members until they have read the series.⁵³ Events that mobilize a multiplicity of *Twilight* fans to gather together and engage in mutual love for *Twilight* continue to be an important force in the proliferation of the *Twilight* phenomenon, if not the important force. According to Rai, "contagion is the modality of historically stratified media assemblages."⁵⁴ Contagion is thus a fundamental aspect of the *Twilight* phenomenon and will most likely continue to be the most crucial strategy of propagating the modern vampire phenomenon.

With every phenomenon, there is usually some type of opposition. For every modern vampire fan, more specifically for every *Twilight* fan, there are anti-*Twilight* proponents who constitute part of the overall *Twilight* phenomenon assemblage. Groups such as "The Anti-*Twilight* Movement"⁵⁵ and "*Twilight* Sucks"⁵⁶ have become popular websites for *Twilight* hate. Others express desires for the return of "real" or "original" vampires while suggesting that modern vampires are castrated versions of "real" vampires. Even an entire feature film, *Vampires Suck*, was recently released as a parody

⁵³ "TwiHard," p. 1.

⁵⁴ Rai, p. 56.

⁵⁵ *The Anti-Twilight Movement*, <http://theantitwilightmovement.webs.com/>, (23 Nov. 2009).

⁵⁶ *Twilight Sucks*, <http://twilightsucks.com/>, (23 Nov. 2009).

of the *Twilight* and *New Moon* books and films.⁵⁷ While these representations echo many of the common criticisms of *Twilight*, they commit themselves to analyzing *The Twilight Saga* with a desire to somehow change Twihard's minds or gather more anti-*Twilighters*. This kind of affective labor, though done in the name of hate, is comparable to the labor *Twilight* fans perform in order to proliferate the series. These anti-*Twilighters* work diligently to analyze every bit of *The Twilight Saga*, admitting that they spent the time to read the series and see the movies.⁵⁸ Although these anti-*Twilight* supporters write about the negative aspects of *The Twilight Saga*, they still participate in the *Twilight* phenomenon and probably even help to cement its followers who join together in defense of their beloved book series. In this way, anti-*Twilight* fans do not comprise an assemblage of affective contagion because no anti-*Twilighters* talk about being addicted to hating *Twilight* and *Twilight* hate is not as easy to "spread" as *Twilight* love. Furthermore, though there are many anti-*Twilighters* in the world, they do not gather together in the same way that the Twihards do with conventions and meetings. While there is some anti-*Twilight* merchandise in existence, it cannot be nearly as profitable as pro-*Twilight* merchandise. Thus the anti-*Twilight* proponents occupy a dimension of negativity within the *Twilight* assemblage in which they participate in similar affective labor as the Twihards in their attempts to put an end to the *Twilight* phenomenon.

It has been suggested that *Twilight*'s author Stephenie Meyer is promoting sexual abstinence for adolescents through *The Twilight Saga*. In the *Twilight* series, sex is represented as something that both Edward and Bella want but cannot participate in

⁵⁷ *Vampires Suck*, dir. Jason Friedberg and Aaron Seltzer, perf. Jenn Proske and Matt Lanter, 20th Century Fox, 2010, DVD.

⁵⁸ "Frequently Asked Questions," *The Anti-Twilight Movement*, <http://theantitwilightmovement.webs.com/faq.htm>, (23 Nov. 2009).

because Edward may hurt Bella inadvertently in the throes of passion. Bella's sexuality is shown to be excessive and uncontrollable, as portrayed by her attempts to seduce Edward, who exhibits complete control over his libido. This message coincides with author Stephenie Meyer's involvement in the Mormon Church and her assertions that she will never depict non-marital sex within any of her novels.⁵⁹ In addition to an abstinence-until-marriage message, none of the characters in *Twilight* participate in "typical" teenage activities such as drinking, drug use, or even using any curse words. This wholesome image has received a positive response from religious communities, which proffer the *Twilight* saga as presenting "nice and honorable vampires."⁶⁰ Despite the extreme opposition other fantasy book series such as the *Harry Potter* series received from religious communities, even though *Harry Potter* also contained no instances of sex or drug use, there is something about *Twilight* that allows these same religious communities to look past the magical and supernatural aspects of the book series and praise them for their overarching "moral" message. This "something" is the strong reinforcement of heterosexuality and patriarchal ideals, which I will discuss in chapter three. While *Harry Potter* has a large, respectable fan base of its own, the *Twilight* saga is being discussed and recommended by churches,⁶¹ thus incorporating a religious population into the *Twilight* fan base, making it all the more important to popular culture.

⁵⁹ Patrick Huguenin, "Stephenie Meyer's vampire books are pure literary gold," *NY Daily News*, 5 Aug. 2008, http://www.nydailynews.com/entertainment/arts/2008/08/03/2008-08-03_stephenie_meyers_vampire_books_are_pure.html, (23 Nov. 2009).

⁶⁰ Fr Peter Malone, "The Twilight Saga: New Moon," *Catholic Diocese of Wollongong*, 19 Nov. 2009, <http://74.125.93.132/search?q=cache:ZLhU7lwR5cJJ:www.dow.org.au/film-reviews/new-moon-the-twilight-saga+catholic+dioceses+review+new+moon&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us&client=firefox-a>, (23 Nov. 2009).

⁶¹ *Touched by a Vampire*, by Beth Felker Jones, applies Christian theology to the *Twilight* saga and includes *Twilight*-themed discussion questions for Christian youth groups.

Bella and Edward's relationship is also in a state of becoming – becoming-violent, becoming-dangerous, becoming-sexual, becoming-immortal, becoming-parents, etc. Their relationship constantly oscillates around conflicts that change their relationship dynamics with each resolution. Edward is always tempted to drink Bella's blood, which defines their relationship as always already a temptation for him and a potential cause of Bella's death. Bella and Edward's becoming-relationship sets the tone of becoming for the entire *Twilight* culture in which becoming is an essential characteristic of the phenomenon.

The modern vampire culture is constantly disturbed with new developments and by vampire fans and as a result the vampire phenomenon itself is also in a state of becoming. The attitude of excess characterized by the Twihards produces a culture in which becoming constitutes the phenomenon itself because it is constantly changing and evolving with new films, books, and television shows, developments among the actors in the films, new merchandise, and new ideas and approaches to vampires. With new ways to express vampire fandom constantly being created, there seems to be an infinite amount of ways to deterritorialize and reterritorialize the modern vampire culture that contributes to its evolution.

Despite the common notion of hybrids (and vampires for that matter) as “monstrous,” modern vampire phenomenon clearly demonstrates how not monstrous vampires and vampire-human relations are now perceived. In fact, it has been speculated that the vampire trend represents a new acceptance of the Other and even possibly “a quiet but profound sexual revolution and a new acceptance of freakiness in mainstream

American life,” as suggested by Stephen Marche of *Esquire*.⁶² Suddenly the Other in the form of the modern vampire is now seen as mysterious and interesting as opposed to monstrous; in fact, this Other is interesting and different specifically by virtue of its Otherness. One of the reasons why vampire fans so diligently wish for vampires to be “real” is partially because vampires now seemingly constitute worlds in which the Other is no longer monstrous, but special. In fact, *South Park* recently aired an episode⁶³ that satirized this phenomenon, depicting the “popular kids” versus the “goth kids.” In this episode the popular kids began dressing as vampires, which entailed wearing dark, gothic clothing and fangs. The kids who identified as “goth” became offended because they felt that dressing in that way was “their” thing, and they are subsequently mistaken for being “vampire kids,” much to their dismay. In other words, the goth kids, whose identities are organized around being Other, are no longer Other when everyone, even the popular kids, are also Other. In fact, at one point the goth kids decide to “go straight” and change from their goth clothing into, as they call it, “Gap clothes.” They are then recognized in insulting ways by their schoolmates for being “normal” and ordinary – in other words, not Other. In the end, the goth kids hold a school assembly in order for them to announce how to distinguish the differences between goth kids and “vampire kids.” After they finish their explanation, despite the insults they deliver to the audience, the crowd of children cheers for them, cementing the Other as no longer monstrous and even potentially desirable.

⁶² Stephen Marche, “What’s Really Going on With All These Vampires?” *Esquire*, 10 Oct. 2009, <http://www.esquire.com/features/thousand-words-on-culture/vampires-gay-men-1109>, (4 Dec. 2009), p. 1.

⁶³ “The Ungroundable,” *South Park*, Comedy Central, 19 Nov. 2008.

These “vampire kids” demonstrate the hybridity of “real” and “fantasy” that I discussed earlier in terms of *Twilight* fans desperately desiring that the fantasy of modern vampires have a corporeal reality. There is no longer a strict line between “real” and “fantasy,” which are collapsed into a hybrid being in which it is not clear where “real” begins and “fantasy” ends. In the same *South Park* episode cited above, one kid vehemently believes that these “vampire kids” are real and the “vampire kids” seem to legitimately believe that they really are vampires. This connects which my previous assertions that *Twilight* fans aspire for a tangible reality of *Twilight* in which the characters and vampires have a corporeal form. The *Twilight* phenomenon has participated in creating and maintaining this new hybrid identity that many of its fans aspire to have and which contributes to proliferating its fan culture.

Lady Gaga plays a profound role in perpetuating the acceptance and even celebration of “monsters.” Lady Gaga has recently exploded in popularity and she frequently uses the word “monster” to refer to herself and her fans. She calls herself “mother monster,” her fans as “little monsters,” her most recent album is entitled *The Fame Monster*, and she is currently touring under the name of “Monster Ball Tour 2010.” Lady Gaga embraces monstrosity, which is evident not only in her use of the word monster but also in her music, choice of dress, and music videos in which she questions and challenges the notions of monstrosity. Sarah Jaffe of AlterNet suggests,

She exists on a line between monstrous and beautiful, making us ask questions about progress, about agency, about control, about men and women, about Americans and the world. She is both a perfect embodiment of American cultural dominance and subverting what that means at every turn.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Sarah Jaffe, “Lady Gaga: Pop Star for a Country and an Empire in Decline,” *AlterNet*, 26 July 2010, http://www.alternet.org/world/147625/lady_gaga:_pop_star_for_a_country_and_an_empire_in_decline?page=1, (8 Nov. 2010), p. 1.

As Lady Gaga challenges monstrosity, she creates a space for others to question their own monstrosities. Lady Gaga connects monstrosity with fandom and reality, rather than evil. The line between humans and monsters has been blurred, suggesting a popular desire for fans of today's vampires and Lady Gaga to subvert norms, rather than conform. Being different is no longer a monstrous concept, according to modern vampire fiction. Blogger Rich Juzwiak, of the blog FourFour, wrote that during a Lady Gaga concert he attended Gaga addressed the audience by saying, "Tonight and every night after, you can be whatever you want to be, little monsters," and "Jump for your freedom! Jump for your soul! And be who you want, goddamn it!"⁶⁵ Lady Gaga equates monstrousness with "freedom" to "be yourself" or "who you really are," by which she means to inspire courage in her fans to embrace their abnormalities and senses of outsidership as opposed to conforming to what society may expect of them. For Lady Gaga, monstrousness is inextricably connected with identity.

In episode twenty of season one of the television series *Glee*, entitled "Theatricality," the question of identity, the vampire, and reality come into play.⁶⁶ Not coincidentally, a major theme of this episode is also Lady Gaga. The effect of this episode is twofold. The "lesson" for the Glee Club members is that being outsiders is something to be proud of, especially since they are all outsiders together. The other effect demonstrates the blurring of reality and fiction that modern vampires have caused and the desire of so many *Twilight* fans for vampires to be "real."

In the beginning of the episode, Tina is reprimanded by Principal Figgins for wearing gothic clothing, which the principal associates with vampires. Will Schuester,

⁶⁵ Rich Juzwiak, "The Populist Narcissist," *FourFour*, 10 July 2010, <http://fourfour.typepad.com/fourfour/2010/07/page/2/>, (9 Nov. 2010), p. 1.

⁶⁶ "Theatricality," *Glee*, Fox Network, 25 May 2010.

the director of the Glee Club, defends Tina to the principal: "Tina is shy and one way she's found to express herself is through her clothes. High school is an incredibly important time when kids get to explore who they are." When Tina attends the Glee Club meeting wearing a sweatshirt and jeans, the Glee Club members try to offer her ideas for a new look. Tina addresses the group, "Look, I appreciate it guys, but it just isn't me. I know who I am and I'm not allowed to show it." Later, the Glee Club experiments with Lady Gaga costumes in an attempt to be theatrical and express themselves in different ways. Two jocks shove Kurt and Tina and threaten them with violence if they do not change their looks. Kurt retorts, "It's called being theatrical. We're showing off who we are." After Finn encounters opposition from the jocks for being in the Glee Club and living with Kurt's family, Finn chides Kurt for not working harder to "blend in." When Kurt is cornered by the jocks, he says to them, "Fine. You want to hit me? You want to beat me up? Go ahead. But I swear to you I will never change. I'm proud to be different. It's the best thing about me." Finn and the Glee Club prevent Kurt from being beat up, but the jocks exit calling them freaks. Finn declares, "We're all freaks together, and we shouldn't have to hide it."

According to this *Glee* episode, being different is not only something to be proud of, but it's something to celebrate; Otherness is desirable. Tina is given a chance to conform when she is banned from dressing in a nonconformist way, but she chooses to continue to dress that way because it is "who she is." When she does dress "normal," her fellow Glee Club members are uneasy, insisting to her that she is not "being herself." Kurt is almost beat up, but even when facing the jocks, he declares that he will never

change because being different is the “best thing about him.” It is not important how or why he is different; all that matters is that he is different.

Throughout this same *Glee* episode, there is a running joke over whether Principal Figgins believes that vampires are real. In the beginning of the episode, as he is reprimanding Tina, he explains, “American teens are coming down with a serious case of *Twilight* fever, transformed from normal children into vampires, obsessed with the occult. And only yesterday this dark specter reared its head at McKinley High.” It then cuts to a scene featuring a group of teens wearing “Team Edward” and “Team Jacob” t-shirts, capes, and fangs. These teens are all females and appear to be outsiders, as the leader of the group was previously in an episode in which she was in the audio-visual club, a club commonly associated with high school outsiders. The leader claims, “This is totally gonna get Robert Pattinson’s attention,” and the group runs and hisses toward a friend of theirs whom they tackle to the ground and pretend to bite while he screams. After Principal Figgins relays this scene for Mr. Schuester and Tina, Mr. Schuester says, “I don’t mean to state the obvious, but you do know that vampires aren’t real, right? They don’t exist?” Principal Figgins dodges the question and Tina says, “My parents won’t even let me watch *Twilight*. My mom says she thinks Kristen Stewart seems like a bitch.” In the end, Tina succeeds in convincing Principal Figgins to allow her to continue to dress gothic only by pretending to be a vampire and threatening him.

The group of *Twilight* fans wears shirts that display the names of the characters from *Twilight*, but they express the hope that they will catch the attention of the actor who plays Edward. Tina states that her parents will not allow her to watch *Twilight* not because her parents dislike the story, but because her mom believes the actress who plays

Bella is a “bitch.” Principal Figgins is somehow convinced that vampires are real and only allows Tina to be “who she is” after she impersonates a vampire and threatens him. Reality and fantasy are blurred repeatedly as the actors who play the characters in the *Twilight* Saga are confused with the actual characters themselves and it is actually believed that vampires are “real.”

In “Blood Moon,” a recent episode of *CSI: Crime Scene Investigations*, reality and fantasy are again questioned and merged.⁶⁷ Set during a fictional convention for vampire and werewolf fans that enjoy emulating vampires and werewolves, a murder occurs when a female vampire finds out that her vampire fiancé used to be a werewolf. Because vampires and werewolves are mortal enemies in most vampire fiction, she finds it necessary to murder her fiancé for his past. After solving the crime, the two lead investigators watch *Nosferatu* and eat lunch. Dr. Langston explains, “You know, people invented stories about werewolves and vampires to explain the evil in the world.” When the investigators receive a call about a triple homicide, Dr. Langston says, “Let’s go hunt some monsters.” Even in this secondary representation of modern vampires, the investigators note the blurring of reality and fantasy when Dr. Langston explains that he believes that werewolves and vampires were inventions to explain the evils of humans. Dr. Langston also conflates murderers with monsters, blurring his own reality with that of monsters and vampires.

The Twilight Saga phenomenon is comprised of an assemblage of hybridity in which the Other is no longer monstrous and the question of what constitutes reality is constantly being deterritorialized. Within this hybrid, which is always in a state of becoming, *Twilight* fans assemble through an affective contagion, “infecting” other

⁶⁷ “Blood Moon,” *CSI: Crime Scene Investigations*, CBS, 7 Oct. 2010.

people with *Twilight* fandom. Modern vampire fans aspire for a *Twilight* reality in which the fantasy is reality. Thus the entire *Twilight* phenomenon is composed of an assemblage of hybridity in which fantasy constitutes reality and consequently creates *Twilight* “addicts” who “crave” this hybrid and aspire to make it part of an actual, tangible reality by whatever means necessary. The hybrids produced by modern vampire fiction are desirable because they give fans a space in which they can experiment with alternative forms of identification that are not constrained by certain strict binaries. Because modern vampire fiction is always in a state of becoming, fans cultivate a culture of excess in hopes of maintaining and possibly even creating spaces for identification with hybrids. The excessive affects caused by modern vampire fiction incite fans to utilize addiction and disease discourse to accurately describe their passion. Because the spaces of identification in modern vampire fiction are often provocative, fans attempt to merge reality with fantasy in attempts to create hybrids in the “real” world. Fans also connect these spaces with their own identities, as evident through Lady Gaga’s connection of monstrosity and *Glee*’s relation of vampires to individuality. These spaces of identification seem to produce the idea that the Other is now being accepted, such as in the *South Park* episode. As I hope to demonstrate in the next two chapters, these spaces of identification are illusions, yet they are absolutely necessary to the modern vampire phenomenon.

CHAPTER TWO

Border Troubling and the Modern Vampire: Hybrids and the Destabilization of Humans, Monsters, Animals, and Personhood

Bella! Werewolves are not good company to keep!
 - Alice Cullen, *Twilight* (2005)

In chapter one, I analyzed elements of the modern vampire phenomenon, such as excessiveness and a blurring of reality and fantasy. In this chapter, I will explore how modern vampires are no longer clearly monsters. I will address the shift from vampires as “evil” to “good” by briefly examining vampires of the past before discussing vampires of today. Modern vampires represent a shift to the blurring of boundaries between living and nonliving, humans and monsters, humans and animals, and good and evil. Modern vampires attempt to distinguish themselves from monsters and animals but in the end only confuse the borders between these ideologies more. By disturbing these boundaries, modern vampires establish a multiplicity of hybrids that are not represented as monstrous, but as exemplary.

Throughout this chapter, I will analyze Gilles Deleuze's and Felix Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* to discuss becoming-animal in relation with and to vampires, humans, monsters, and animals. I will also explore Giorgio Agamben's concept of the anthropological machine in *The Open: Man and Animal* in order to discuss the vampire body. Lastly, I plan to use Jacques Derrida's *The Animal That Therefore I Am* in order to explore what constitutes an animal, a human, and food. The goal of this chapter is to explore how this new conception of "vampire ethics" has taken its place as a potentially durable change to the myth of the vampire through its contribution to border troubling and hybrids. I will be specifically examining *The Twilight Saga*, though I will also address *The Vampire Diaries* and *True Blood*.

The myth of the vampire has existed for centuries, yet in the last five years it has exploded in popularity among people of many ages. No longer is the word vampire automatically synonymous with monster. While earlier representations of vampires functioned often to draw a strict boundary between life and death, human and animal, today's vampires are blurring that boundary. It is thus important to explore how vampires functioned in the past in order to trace the changes that have occurred in or led to modern vampires. In her dissertation entitled "Estranging Science, Fictionalizing Bodies: Viral Invasions, Infectious Fictions, and the Biological Discourses of 'The Human,' 1818-2005," Laura Diehl writes about early monster fiction:

Both *Frankenstein* [1818] and *The Vampyre* [1819] registered the shift from a religious to a materialist worldview (where the monstrous warned not of spiritual apostasy but of material degeneration), and the emergence of a strange new biological epistemology, a vision of science's prerogative to discriminate nature from artifice, life from nonlife.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Laura Diehl, "Estranging Science, Fictionalizing Bodies: Viral Invasions, Infections Fictions, and the Biological Discourses of 'The Human,' 1818-2005" (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 2008), p. 2.

Not only did early monsters initially reflect the fears of degeneration and contamination in terms of blood, genes, and race, but they also represented the emergence of modern science and the increased need to define and categorize. With the development of modern science along with the theory of evolution in Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* [1859], the importance of genes became prominent as race and pathology were instituted as biology. Furthermore, gene purity became conflated with the nation, as any contamination of the nation's blood was believed to affect the "purity" of the nation itself. Diehl describes in detail:

Social and sexual medicine began to exploit the panoply of pre-modern bodies and sub-human biologies from the vampire tradition to articulate devolutionary properties, as well as to mobilize hygienical projects to guard the entryways into the nation's bloodlines. The language of (vampiric) epidemiology—bad blood, infection, hygiene, invasion, evolution—converged with the language of national defense—surveillance, border patrols, resistance, immunity—to militarize the fight against foreign agents determined to invade the West and contaminate whiteness.⁶⁹

Early forms of vampirism represented the fear of whiteness and white nations being contaminated by non-whiteness.

Dracula [1897] is often cited as one of the most pivotal forms of vampire fiction.

Diehl explains, "...from 1860 to 1900, social and sexual medicine marshaled the monstrous as a means of signification by which borders and bodies were drawn, maintained, and policed."⁷⁰ Darwin's *Origin of Species* indirectly contributed to the development of degeneration theory, which attempted to further define and "mark the borders between the normal and the pathological, the human from the less than human."⁷¹ Identity became conflated with biology and genetics and the fear of contamination of identity was represented through vampirism. Diehl argues,

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 36.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 62.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 93.

As an effective imaginary source that could warn of promiscuous couplings and racial impurities, the vampire was mobilized again and again to lend sexual, racial, and biological models of identity explanatory power (and then science gave back to literature in the form of *Dracula*).⁷²

Early vampire fiction is a result of modern science. Evolution contributed to fears of gene contamination while biology was inextricably connected with identity and the nation.

It is important that I address “original” vampire representations in order to continue to the discussion of the “modern” vampire. Early vampires were monsters that largely represented the Western fear of contamination of whiteness through genetics and biology and the development of biology as identity. While I wish I could delve into the history of early vampires more in detail, I cannot do this here. Essentially, early vampires represented the attempt to draw strict borders between life and nonlife, the pathological and the normal, the human and the nonhuman.

Modern vampires are frequently referred to as “vegetarian” vampires because they no longer consume human blood. “Vegetarian” vampire ethics operate on the assumption that it is more acceptable to kill animals instead of humans. There is a divide in these fictional vampire communities over whether to drink human blood (which in the *Twilight* universe means automatically killing a human) or to drink animal (nonhuman) blood, which is considered more humane yet not quite as satisfying or appetizing. Some semi-vegetarian vampires obtain blood from hospitals, rather than harm or kill humans. Jean Kazez, in her article “Dying to Eat: Vampire Ethics of *Twilight*,” writes, “Animal blood is like tofu, for the Cullen family, but they live on a human-free diet anyway, because it’s the right thing to do.”⁷³ Vampires require blood for survival, so they cannot

⁷² Ibid., p. 37.

⁷³ Jean Kazez “Dying to Eat: Vegetarian Ethics of *Twilight*,” eds. William Irwin, Rebecca Housel, and J. Jeremy Wisnewski, *Twilight and Philosophy*, (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2009), p. 25.

simply abstain from blood-drinking altogether. Therefore, the Cullens in *The Twilight Saga* and Stefan Salvatore in *The Vampire Diaries* decide that it is more ethically responsible to consume animal blood rather than human blood. They do not just consume rats or vermin, however; they go “hunting” in the woods where they kill mountain lions, bears, deer, and other large forest animals. In *Twilight*, Edward compares vampire hunting for animals to imitating animals, comparing his hunting skills to those of a lion.⁷⁴ He describes to Bella, “If you’ve ever seen a bear attack on television, you should be able to visualize Emmett [a fellow Cullen and vampire] hunting.”⁷⁵ When Bella asks if she could ever watch Edward in the midst of a hunt, he reacts with anger: “‘Absolutely not!’ His face turned whiter than usual, and his eyes were suddenly furious.”⁷⁶ Edward later explains his anger by connecting his hunting abilities with a loss of control: “When we hunt...we give ourselves over to our senses...govern less with our minds. Especially our sense of smell. If you were anywhere near me when I lost control that way...”⁷⁷ In this sense, Edward is becoming-animal while hunting, as he allows himself to “govern less with his mind” and give in to his animal instincts, acting as a predator hunting prey. By connecting a loss of control and monstrosity with becoming-animal, Edward makes it clear that humans, or monsters that strive to act like humans, are superior to animals. Edward would never intentionally hurt Bella, but, when indulging in his animal instincts, he implies that his lack of control could potentially hurt her. This also implies that monsters are not dissimilar from animals, governing less with their minds and more with their instincts. Monsters are often frightening because they are unpredictable and

⁷⁴ Stephanie Meyer, *Twilight*, (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2005), p. 216.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 216.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 216.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 225

dangerous, like animals sometimes are. The “animal” side of himself that Edward fears is also his “monstrous” side, the side that desires blood. This also slightly explains why vampires are no longer scary to the general public. How can these monsters be scary if they do not act anything like monsters? This demonstrates that *The Twilight Saga* and modern vampire fiction in general determine that humanity is directly connected to the capacity for control and the ability to make good choices, qualities that they believe are required for a humanitarian existence.

Modern vampires are not as monstrous as vampires were in the past. In fact, vampires today act more like superheroes than evil villains. Judith Halberstam writes that monster narratives “produce ideological and interpretive strategies for readers to recognize the human and distinguish between human and monster” (56). In other words, the monster is used to define who or what the human is by comparison. Modern vampires function to reflect humanity. Humans typically have the ability to choose how to live their lives and can decide whether or not to behave as good or bad people. Modern vampires also have this choice. The consequences for their choices are more severe, since choosing to behave in an evil manner often results in human deaths, but they portray the extreme version of humanity. Modern vampire representations dissolve the boundary between humans and monsters, demonstrating that even monsters have a level of “humanity” somewhere inside of them and have the capacity to act on that humanity and live in a morally acceptable manner. As a result of the blurring between monsters and humans, modern vampires also imply that humans might have a level of “monstrosity” inside them.

While modern vampires struggle to parse out what it means to be “evil” or “good,” they disturb the good/evil binary and illustrate the difficulties to be either always good or always evil. Both vampires Angel from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and Angel and Stefan from *The Vampire Diaries* allude to vigilante activities in their pasts. In “Midnight Sun,” Edward Cullen admits to having lived as a vigilante when he first became a vampire, drinking the blood of and murdering only criminals. When Edward encounters a group of men about to rape Bella, he recalls his days as a vigilante and contemplates killing the potential rapist Lonnie, “...the monster named *Lonnie* would beg for death long before I would give him that gift.”⁷⁸ Edward, a vampire who considers himself a monster or to at least have a monstrosity inside of him, also refers to a human male rapist as a “monster.” This connects with the dissolution of the human/monster binary, suggesting that all beings have a level of monstrosity. Although modern vampires believe that murder is wrong, they can find ways to justify it, such as through vigilantism. For modern vampires, monsters are not just supernatural creatures; they are anyone who lives an “evil” life. Their activities suggest a merge of good and evil and right and wrong, as it is seemingly acceptable for them to murder people whom they perceive as “evil” but it is not right to kill just anyone.

The deconstruction of the good/evil binary is represented quite clearly through the relationship between brothers and vampires Stefan and Damon Salvatore in *The Vampire Diaries*. The majority of the first season leads the audience to believe that Stefan is the good, vegetarian vampire while Damon is the traditional, evil vampire. However, toward the end of the season, it is evident that Damon is beginning to change for the good while Stefan begins to struggle with his bloodlust. In fact, Damon begins to change his evil

⁷⁸ Stephenie Meyer, “Midnight Sun,” unpublished partial draft, 2008, p. 172.

ways for the love of a woman – which I will discuss further in chapter three.

Furthermore, the audience learns that Damon only became a vampire because Stefan tricked him. When season one of *The Vampire Diaries* culminates, it is not quite clear who is “good” and who is “evil” and it is evident that what it means to be good or evil is negotiable. These brothers demonstrate that the boundaries between good and evil, monster and human, are all an illusion.

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari discuss what they refer to as “becoming-animal,” which significantly applies to modern vampires, as I briefly mentioned earlier. Deleuze and Guattari explain, “The becoming-animal of the human being is real, even if the animal the human being becomes is not; and the becoming-other of the animal is real, even if that something other it becomes is not.”⁷⁹ Becoming-animal does not necessarily involve a human literally transforming into an animal. Modern vampires attempt to avoid or stop becoming-animal through the application of their vegetarianism, which I will explain further later in this chapter. Deleuze and Guattari continue, “A becoming-animal always involves a pack, a band, a population, a peopling, in short, a multiplicity.”⁸⁰ In the case of the vampires in *The Twilight Saga*, the story centers on the Cullen coven, who are bonded by nature of their decision to be vegetarian vampires, which is a resistance to becoming-animal. Because they often connect becoming-animal with monstrosity and evil, becoming-animal for modern vampires is a multiplicity of becomings. Deleuze and Guattari write, “The pack is simultaneously an animal reality, and the reality of the becoming-animal of the human being; contagion is simultaneously an animal peopling,

⁷⁹ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p. 238.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 239.

and the propagation of the animal peopling of the human being.”⁸¹ In *The Twilight Saga*, the Cullen coven is constantly in a state of becoming-animal, though the nature of their bond over denying their desire for human blood prevents their becoming-animal from becoming a total reality. Although becoming-animal is part of existence as a vampire, the Cullens bond together to stop this process from occurring fully.

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari describe becoming-vampire and becoming-werewolf as types of becoming-human, not becoming-animal:

Man does not become wolf, or vampire, as if he changed molar species; the vampire and the werewolf are becomings of man, in other words, proximities between molecules in composition, relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness between emitted particles.⁸²

Because becoming-animal is more than just a human body physically transforming into an animal body, becoming-werewolf and becoming-vampire are more complex than just a physical transformation. In terms of becoming, Patricia MacCormack writes in her article “Unnatural Alliances,” “one never becomes a vampire or werewolf but constantly oscillates between and within variable intensities created uniquely at the encounter.”⁸³ Modern vampires are constantly oscillating between becoming-animal and becoming-human, as whether they are becoming-animal or becoming-human depends on to what degree they engage with their “human,” “animal,” or “monster” selves, as they tend to perceive them as separate entities in a single body. Modern vampires attempt to draw strict lines between human, animal, and monster, designating their animal, monster, and human sides as distinct and declaring the human side as the more important and moral way with which to engage the world. Ultimately, however, they fail, as their human,

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 242.

⁸² Ibid., p. 275.

⁸³ Patricia MacCormack, “Unnatural Alliances,” *Deleuze and Queer Theory*, eds. Chrysanthi Nigianni and Merl Storr, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd, 2009), p. 142.

monster, and animal sides frequently collide. It is this philosophy though that causes the vampires to become vegetarian vampires and choose to learn to resist their “animal” urges to feed on humans. Thus the vampires retain what are typically believed to be uniquely “human” characteristics, such as the ability to bond with other beings, maintain intimate relationships, and love other beings.

In Giorgio Agamben’s *The Open: Man and Animal*, Agamben discusses how the anthropological machine of the moderns functions “by excluding as not (yet) human an already human being from itself, that is, by animalizing the human, by isolating the nonhuman within the human...”⁸⁴ This quote exemplifies the body of the vampire, which is different from humans because of the nature of its vampirism, which renders its body as dead. Although the human body is dead, however, the vampire body takes on animalistic and supernatural qualities that cause it to be a more powerful body, physically speaking, than a human body. The vampire body, which visually appears to be (mostly) human, has many nonhuman characteristics that tend to be emphasized in contrast with humans – extreme coldness, paleness, superhuman beauty, etc. Thus the modern vampire is a nonhuman human. The vampire body is a body that was once human and still appears to be (mostly) human, yet spectators are constantly reminded of how nonhuman the vampire body actually is. Edward frequently expresses how unusual it is that Bella is so attracted to the Cullens while many other humans suspect something “unnatural” about the Cullens and instinctually attempt to avoid them. The vampire body largely functions through the isolation of its nonhuman characteristics within its human-resembling body. In fact, vampire ethics allow the vampire to isolate its nonhuman instincts, like the urge

⁸⁴ Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), trans. Board of Trustees of the Leland Stanford Junior University, p. 37.

to feed on human blood, in order to control its instincts and alternatively feed on animal blood.

Agamben further explains the anthropological machine and the distinctions of man/animal, human/inhuman, which obviously have serious investments in the vampire body:

Insofar as the production of man through the opposition man/animal, human/inhuman, is at stake here, the machine necessarily functions by means of an exclusion (which is also always already a capturing) and an inclusion (which is also always already an exclusion).⁸⁵

Modern vampire ethics question the meanings of man/animal, human/inhuman, bringing a perspective to personhood that is characterized by the attempt to include the human characteristics and exclude the traditional vampire and monstrous traits. Agamben continues to explicate the anthropological machine:

If, in the machine of the moderns, the outside is produced through the exclusion of an inside and the inhuman produced by animalizing the human, here the inside is obtained through the inclusion of an outside, and the non-man is produced by the humanization of an animal: the man-ape, the *enfant sauvage* or *Homo ferus*, but also and above all the slave, the barbarian, and the foreigner, as figures of an animal in human form.⁸⁶

The vampire is, literally, a “figure of an animal in human form.” The new vampire ethics that deem it “wrong” to drink the blood of humans enable these vampires to live as and with humans or at least attempt to pass as human within the world of humans. If we imagine a *Twilight* universe in which Edward and the Cullens consumed human blood, they would not be able to function within the world of humans. Kasez writes, “If Edward had to kill [humans] to survive...he’d certainly stop being a true member of our [human]

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 37.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 37.

community. He'd have to skulk around in the shadows, keeping secrets and telling lies."⁸⁷

Through the exclusion of a vampire's "true nature" and instincts, the modern vampire obtains an "inside" look at humanity by being able to live with and act as a human by following the law that prohibits murder of humans.

In *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, Jacques Derrida describes his experience with his pet cat involving his cat's gaze at his naked body. In this description, one of the fundamental questions of what it means to be a human or an animal is exposed. Derrida describes feeling ashamed when, while naked, he finds his cat staring directly at him. He wonders why he feels shame from his cat's stare and questions what it means when his cat looks at him: "An animal looks at me. What should I think of this sentence?"⁸⁸ With modern vampires, this sentence is reflected in a multiplicity of ways. In what way(s) does Edward look at Bella or Stefan look at Elena when he desires her both as a sexual partner and as a source of food? In what way(s) does Bella look at Edward or Elena look at Stefan when she desires him as a sexual partner but simultaneously knows that he wants to, literally, eat her? In what way(s) are beings such as vampires and werewolves humans, nonhumans, animals, or something else?

As discussed above, vegetarian vampire ethics question what it means to be an animal or a monster. Though the vampires within *The Twilight Saga* generally appear to be humans, in becoming-vampire they gain "animalistic" qualities such as higher speed on foot, better agility, and stronger senses of smell and sight. Indeed, Edward describes himself as a predator and hunter: "I'm the world's most dangerous predator. Everything about me invites you in. My voice, my face, even my smell. As if I would need any of

⁸⁷ Kazez, p. 34.

⁸⁸ Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (Bronx: Fordham University Press, 2008), trans, David Wills, p. 6.

that. As if you could outrun me. As if you could fight me off. I'm designed to kill.”⁸⁹

Thus, in order for Edward to retain a sense of “humanity,” it is essential for him to reject his “animalistic” qualities and resist his most basic instinct: drinking the blood of humans. Edward asks Bella, “You don’t care if I’m a monster? If I’m not *human*?”⁹⁰ Edward equates “monster” with “nonhuman.” Edward’s decision to resist drinking the blood of humans is intimately connected with the belief that the fundamental difference between vampire and animal is that of choice. It is Edward’s responsibility to choose to drink the blood of animals instead of humans because he *can* choose, as opposed to animals that supposedly do not have the abilities to choose.

Vegetarian vampire ethics also redefine what it means to be food. In *The Twilight Saga*, the Cullens (as well as a few other covens that are introduced later in the *Twilight* series), actively make the choice to be vegetarian vampires. In the article “Carlisle,” authors Andrew and Jenny Terjesen explain, “The Cullens are not a family by virtue of blood (or even blood-drinking). They are a family because they share relationships with one another that define not only who they are, but how they live their lives.”⁹¹ Because the Cullens choose to drink animal blood instead of human blood, they open up a space in which they have bonds with each other and form loving relationships. Drinking the blood of animals, however, does not quell these vegetarian vampires’ desires for human blood. Edward’s initial attraction to Bella is not due to how attractive she is but how much he wants to consume her blood. He even analogizes his desire for Bella’s blood to that of a human’s desire for different flavors of ice cream: “You know how everyone enjoys

⁸⁹ *Twilight*, dir. Catherine Hardwicke, writ. Melissa Rosenberg, perf. Kristen Steward and Robert Pattinson, Blu-Ray, Summit Entertainment, 2008.

⁹⁰ *Twilight*, p. 184.

⁹¹ Andrew Terjesen and Jenny Terjesen, “Carlisle,” eds. William Irwin, Rebecca Housel, and J. Jeremy Wisniewski, *Twilight and Philosophy*, (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2009), p. 57.

different flavors? [...] Some people love chocolate ice cream, others prefer strawberry?

[...] Sorry about the food analogy – I couldn't think of another way to explain.”⁹²

Edward apologizes for his food analogy yet that is exactly what Bella is to him potentially – food. His initial attraction to Bella is not caused by the sight of her beauty, but the smell of her blood. Even an outsider notes about Edward to Bella, disdainfully, “He looks at you like...like you're something to eat...”⁹³ If someone who is unaware of Edward's vampirism recognizes that Edward is looking at Bella not in the typical way that an admiring male may look at a female, clearly there is something important about the dynamics of Edward and Bella's relationship and Bella's alternating status as Edward's potential love interest or food. Modern vampires trouble the boundaries between what it means to be a human and what it means to be food.

The themes of food and consumption connect with animals in the character Emmett Cullen's transformation from human to vampire. Rosalie Cullen, already a vampire, discovers Emmett in the midst of what would have been a fatal bear attack, during which she rescues him and Emmett is subsequently changed into a vampire in order to “save” his life. This bear attack depicts what *The Twilight Saga* claims as the fundamental differences between animals, monsters, and vampires – that of choice and control. In this scene, the bear is a monster who almost committed murder. Vampires, unlike animals, have the ability to choose whether or not to kill humans and therefore they possess the important responsibility to choose what is “right” and avoid the temptation to feed on humans. Choosing not to kill humans is what designates the vampires from becoming-animal to becoming-human. In fact, the vampires who feed on

⁹² *Twilight*, p. 267.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 221.

humans are visually separated from those who do not, as even their appearances are significantly different. Those who do consume the blood of humans have bright red irises, while the vampires who do not consume human blood have gold irises, allowing them to fit in with humans much easier than human-consuming vampires. *The Twilight Saga* portrays vampires as hybrids of becoming-human and becoming-animal, with the vegetarian vampires choosing to deny their becoming-animal process and allow their becoming-human side to dominate in attempts to resemble humans better.

Despite the hybrid nature of vampires as both becoming-animal and becoming-human, *The Twilight Saga* suggests that the Cullens' unusual decision to be vegetarians allows them to access the becoming-human aspect of themselves more strongly than vampires that adhere to traditional vampire ways. In the end of *Breaking Dawn*, the fourth and final book of *The Twilight Saga*, a nomad, human-blood-drinking vampire named Garrett steps in the middle of a confrontation between the Volturi (an ancient group of vampire lawmakers who drink human blood) and the Cullens, in order to provide a unique perspective with the intent of solving the conflict between the Volturi and the Cullens. He announces,

The Volturi came to erase what they perceive as the competition. Perhaps, like me, you look at this clan's golden eyes [the Cullens] and marvel. They are difficult to understand, it's true. But the ancient ones [the Volturi] look and see something besides their strange choice. They see *power*.⁹⁴

Garrett makes a connection between the Cullens' choice to be vegetarian vampires and the apparent power they gain from such an unexpected lifestyle choice. How do the Cullens gain power simply by abstaining from drinking human blood? Garrett continues:

I have witnessed the bonds within this family – I say *family* and not *coven*. These strange golden-eyed ones deny their very natures. But in return have they found

⁹⁴ Stephanie Meyer, *Breaking Dawn*, (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2008), p. 717.

something worth even more, perhaps, than mere gratification of desire? I've made a little study of them in my time here, and it seems to me that intrinsic to this intense family binding – that which makes them possible at all – is the peaceful character of this life of sacrifice. There is no aggression here... There is no thought for domination.⁹⁵

Garrett asserts that the denial of desire for human blood allows the Cullens to bond and connect as a family, rather than as a coven filled with insignificant, impersonal relationships defined simply by a joint desire for human blood. By denying “their very natures,” the Cullens somehow unlock a way for vampires to form actual relationships not defined by human blood. This sacrifice, as Garrett refers to it, allows for a more meaningful existence that is judged to be worth more than “mere gratification of desire.” The Cullens’ “peaceful” lifestyle is threatening to the Volturi because their unselfish existence makes them harder to defeat; they are more powerful as a group than as separate individuals and they cannot be easily separated from each other. Thus the Cullens’ resistance to “mere gratification of desire” grants them an untouchable power that even ancient, powerful vampires such as the Volturi cannot access. Vegetarian vampires are monsters that do not behave as monsters, and thus they are powerful.

Vampires are not the only beings within modern vampire fiction who struggle with becoming-animal and becoming-human. Another major conflict within modern vampire fiction involves the epic battle between the vampires and werewolves. In *The Twilight Saga*, the Native American Quileute tribe has the ability to pass down genes that allow certain members of the tribe to turn into wolves, a seemingly more appropriate bodily format with which to oppose and destroy vampires. In fact, Jacob, a werewolf, explains that “the cold ones are the natural enemies of the wolf – well, not the wolf

⁹⁵ Ibid., pp. 717-718.

really, but the wolves that turn into men...”⁹⁶ Jacob continues to account for the existence of werewolves by likening it to the inability for “good” to exist without “bad:” “‘It’s the reason we exist – because they do.’”⁹⁷ Aside from the obvious, stereotypical connection of Native Americans as inherently close to animals and nature, it is interesting that the only beings in modern vampire fiction that are endowed with abilities that allow them the capacity to defeat vampires are wolves – and not just wolves, but werewolves, or men who change into wolves. This is an example of becoming-human, as Deleuze and Guattari proposed, because although the werewolves physically transform into animals, they retain their human characteristics while in wolf form, which simply allows them a better bodily format with which to fight and defeat vampires. Werewolves are also frequently portrayed as monsters, yet in modern vampire fiction they are often meant to protect humans from vampires. Thus werewolves in modern vampire fiction also dissolve boundaries between what it means to be a monster, a human, or an animal.

Insults hurled by the mortal enemy vampires and werewolves take the form of animal slurs. The werewolves typically refer to the vampires as “leeches,”⁹⁸ while the vampires refer to the werewolves as “dogs” or “mutts.”⁹⁹ Despite the fact that these animals are not inherently “evil” or “bad” animals, they take on a derogatory manner in *The Twilight Saga* because they symbolize what both of these instances of becoming-human are trying to avoid – becoming-animal. Vampires and werewolves may resemble animals in certain ways (or even physically become animals, as in the case of the werewolves), but they attempt to avoid becoming-animal at all costs, for it is the animal

⁹⁶ Stephenie Meyer, *New Moon*, (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2006), p. 293.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 309.

⁹⁸ Stephenie Meyer, *Eclipse*, (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2007), p. 33.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

part of themselves that causes them to lose control and give in to violence or desire. As *The Twilight Saga* demonstrates, when someone loses control and gives in to a certain desire that they consider to be “wrong,” bad things happen.

An interesting example of *The Twilight Saga*’s stance on the dangers of the animal is told by the character of Emily, who is the partner of Sam, the leader of the werewolves. A werewolf named Embry warns Bella not to stare at Emily, and she quickly finds out that it is because Emily’s face is severely scarred:

The right side of her face was scarred from hairline to chin by three thick, red lines, livid in color though they were long healed. One eye pulled down the corner of her dark, almond-shaped right eye, another twisted the right side of her mouth into a permanent grimace.¹⁰⁰

Bella continues to use finite words such as “ruined” to describe Emily’s damaged (though clearly not “ruined” because she can still smile and speak) mouth. Although the werewolves typically have full control over their ability to change from werewolf to human (or vice versa), one downside of being a werewolf is that extreme emotions experienced in human form can cause the werewolf to lose control and induce the change without notice. Jacob explains, “Sam lost control of his temper for just one second...and [Emily] was standing too close.”¹⁰¹ Thus Sam’s loss of mastery over his animal side, for even just one second, caused irreversible damage. In *The Twilight Saga*, a lack of control is equal to animality, which is connected to hurt, damage, fear, monstrosity, and potentially “evil.” Control, therefore, is ascribed by *The Twilight Saga* as a unique human ability that lends a significant amount of power to humans relative to animals. Emily is a visual reminder of the fine or even nonexistent line between becoming-human and

¹⁰⁰ *New Moon*, p. 331.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 345.

becoming-animal for *The Twilight Saga* and the devastating possibilities for humans (or human-like beings) who fail to control their animality.

Aside from *The Twilight Saga*, there are many other recent vampire representations that explore the themes that I have discussed throughout this chapter. A recent film, *Daybreakers*, tells the story of a world in which the majority of the population are vampires (due to an unexplained virus) and the human population is quickly dwindling because the vampires “farm” the remaining humans for their blood supply in a pharmaceutical company in which the humans are essentially unconscious and attached to machines that extract their blood. With the human population and thus their blood supply decreasing rapidly, the vampires are being deprived of blood, which causes frontal lobe deterioration and a significant decrease in serotonin that changes the vampires from physically appearing as humans to giant, bat-like monsters in less than two weeks. Aside from the obvious commentary on food and dwindling resources in terms of the vampires farming the humans for blood, it is interesting that once again the main character, “coincidentally” named Edward, refuses to drink human blood and is sympathetic to the underground, runaway humans that he meets. This film presents a contrast of the human side of the vampire and the animal/monstrous side, showing the human side in Edward and the animal side in the blood-deprived vampires who turn into, essentially, animals or monsters. One of these monsters breaks into Edward’s home and is shown to act aggressively, uncontrollably, and instinctually, licking blood off the wall and attacking Edward when it feels threatened. This monster is defeated and police officers visit Edward’s home to file a report. One of the detectives looks at the dead

monster on the floor and says, disgustfully, “Animals.”¹⁰² The detective’s comment reflects the ambiguity of the vampire though the blurry line between human and animal; despite the fact that this animal/monster was, very recently, a vampire, it now resembles an animal more closely and is therefore now worthy of contempt.

Although the vampire was once an evil monster with no identity other than its monstrousness, modern vampires are perceived as persons now, rather than monsters. Modern vampires are deeply concerned about “who” or “what” they are, whether they are monsters, animals, humans, dead, or alive. Ian Somerhalder, the actor who plays the usually evil vampire Damon Salvatore in *The Vampire Diaries* television series, said in an interview published in the September 2010 issue of *Rolling Stone*, “Vampires used to be ugly. [...] Now they’re more aesthetically appealing, but they’re still there to answer one question: What’s it like to be an outsider?”¹⁰³ Modern vampires are outsiders in the vampire community because they have chosen to deny their natures and live “vegetarian” lifestyles, and they are outsiders in the human community because they are vampires among humans. They do not quite fit in entirely anywhere. As they attempt to define who or what they are, they break down binaries such as humans/animals, humans/monsters, alive/dead, and good/evil. Modern vampire fiction functions as an assemblage of hybridity. Not only are modern vampires hybrids of living/dead, humans/monsters, and humans/animals, but the relationships between humans and vampires also constitute hybridity in a multiplicity of ways. Modern vampires are hybrids who are able to successfully “pass” as human yet are not actually human or living. As modern vampires break down binaries, they form hybrids, which allow spaces in which new forms of

¹⁰² *Daybreakers*, dir. Michael Spierig and Peter Spierig, perf. Ethan Hawke and Sam Neill, Film, Lionsgate Films, 2010.

¹⁰³ Melissa Maerz, “The Vampire: Damon, ‘The Vampire Diaries,’” *Rolling Stone*, 16 Sept. 2010, p. 58.

identification that merge multiple binaries and categories are created. I will discuss modern vampire hybridity more in detail in chapter three.

The Twilight Saga connects resistance to gratification of desires with power, family, and morality while condemning animals as mindless barbarians with little or no value other than as food. This attitude toward animals is important because of the popularity of *The Twilight Saga* as well as the growing popularity in general of these “moral” vampires who drink animal blood instead of human blood and are subsequently viewed by the (female) fans as romantic, specifically in light of these vampires’ supposed selfless sacrifices. Drinking the blood of animals rather than humans allows these vampires to be closer to humanity because humans also consume animal meat. While many animals may consume the meat of other animals and potentially humans, humans generally do not eat other humans. By choosing to drink only the blood of animals, vegetarian vampires obtain a closer connection to humanity.

The Twilight Saga contains an ontological debate about the nature of personhood. If vampires are hybrids of human/nonhuman, man/animal, dead/alive, and becoming-animal/becoming-human yet still privileged with the capacity for human-associated skills such as choice, control, language, respect, etc., then what does it mean to be a “person?” Derrida questioned what it meant when his cat looked at him, while I question what it means when vegetarian vampires live among humans, sustain themselves on animal blood, yet still desire the blood of humans. The Cullens, though vampires, are able to successfully “pass” as humans and assimilate within human culture although they are not humans. Bella, a human, manages to fall in love with Edward, despite their differences. Furthermore, millions of women have fallen in love with Edward, believing him to be

romantic and passionate, willing to overlook his diet and lack of a pulse. The vampires in *The Twilight Saga* are recognized as “persons,” and not “monsters,” because the nature of their hybridity due to their vegetarian diets allows them to eliminate the ambiguity of vampire existence and obtain a closer proximity to humanity.

The Twilight Saga is an assemblage of vampires, animals, humans, personhood, and food, presenting a stance on the differences between animals and humans and placing preference on humans over animals, even if those humans are not entirely “human.” The new vegetarian vampire myth makes the judgment that animals are appropriate food for both vampires and humans and that vampires who choose to drink the blood of animals as opposed to humans are more civilized and human-like. *The Twilight Saga* suggests that animal lives do not have the same worth as human lives because animals do not have the same control over life events that humans do. The vampires in *The Twilight Saga* inhabit both human and animal characteristics but see their human side as the most important and their animal side as a temptation and risk. *The Twilight Saga* connects instincts and “natural urges” to becoming-animal, suggesting that it is the animal side of the vampire that induces temptation to do “wrong,” such as drink human blood. Therefore, *The Twilight Saga* attaches power to choice, demonstrating that humans (or vampires) have the ability to avoid their natural, “animal” urges by choosing to refuse to give into animalistic temptation, while animals do not have the capacity for choice. Furthermore, it implies that it is the responsibility of vampires to resist their animal urges and instead take on a life of abstinence from any sense of becoming-animal, which also provides said vampires with a fuller and more satisfactory life. Vegetarian vampire ethics reaffirm and reinforce connections of instincts and desires with becoming-animal, reminding us that it

is our responsibilities as humans to resist temptations in order to live a “good” life filled with relationships, happiness, and love. *The Twilight Saga* and other representations of vegetarian vampires are popular and important because they reflect a new acceptance of the “monster,” as long as that monster acts in a remotely human way.

Vampires are traditionally seen as monsters. The current vampire trend reveals that these modern vampires who reject their natures are not monstrous. Instead, they are outsiders, struggling with their identities, blurring the lines of what it means to be monsters, animals, humans, alive, or dead. Even as hybrids, modern vampires are not monstrous but instead represent alternative spaces of identification that excite and interest fans. Modern vampires are no longer perceived as things but as actual persons. Modern vampires provide spaces in which their audiences are able to acknowledge the monsters inside without letting the monsters out.

CHAPTER THREE

The Recuperation of the Modern Vampire: From Hybridity to Heterosexuality

“I may not be a human, but I am a man.”
 - Edward Cullen, *Twilight* (2005)

In chapter two, I explored the major themes and characteristics of modern vampires while tracing the trajectory of representations of “traditional” vampires to what (or whom) vampires are today. Chapter two concluded with the argument that modern vampires have contributed to a blurring of borders between such ideologies as the monster, the human, and the animal and have encouraged a proliferation of hybrids that are not viewed as monstrous but exemplary. In this chapter, I will explore the ways in which such binary transgressing and hybrids are able to exist so peacefully in modern vampire fiction due to the reinforcement of heterosexuality and gender binaries. I will primarily use Bruno Latour’s work in *We Have Never Been Modern* as well as Patricia MacCormack’s notions of hybridities in her article, “Unnatural Alliances.”

In Bruno Latour’s *We Have Never Been Modern* (1991), Latour discusses the contradictory nature of the moderns that includes two paradoxes and a constitution of three guarantees that reveal that we have never actually been modern. Latour asserts that these paradoxes of Nature and Society are

able to make Nature intervene at every point in the fabrication of their societies while they go right on attributing to Nature its radical transcendence; they are going to become the only actors in their own political destiny, while they go right on making their society hold together by mobilizing Nature. On the one hand, the transcendence of Nature will not prevent its social immanence; on the other, the immanence of the social will not prevent the Leviathan from remaining transcendent.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 32.

The modern is a paradox constituted through contradictions that allow for events to occur while simultaneously other events that guarantee the first events also contradict those events. He continues, “We must admit that this is a rather neat construction that makes it possible to do everything without being limited by anything.” In other words, the contradictory nature of the moderns allows it to achieve everything and nothing at the same time. It is by these guidelines that the modern vampire phenomenon has occurred. As I have demonstrated, as a result of the fact that modern vampires are no longer monstrous due to their embracing of the “vegetarian” lifestyle, they are constantly negotiating who or what they are. They disturb the human/animal and human/monster binaries even while attempting to strictly define them. While troubling these binaries, the modern vampire embodies a multiplicity of hybrids. The modern vampire is human and animal, human and monster, not either/or. These hybrids are not portrayed or received as monstrous, but instead as provocative and interesting. In fact, modern vampire fiction makes it quite clear that non-hybrids are boring, weak, and average in comparison.

As Latour says, however, modern vampires “do everything without being limited by anything.” They present their audiences with seemingly progressive instances of hybrids, insisting that categories are not and should not be forced on anyone. In fact, the characters that simply fit into one category are represented as boring and average. Despite all of this potential complexity, modern vampire fiction is resolved smoothly through the heterosexual romance. Modern vampires present disturbed binaries and hybrids but are not limited by them, even with the supposedly positive representations of hybrids, because their stories ultimately revolve around and culminate with the heterosexual union, which reinforces sexuality and gender binaries. The tension in the modern vampire

assemblage caused by the hybrids and binary transgressions opens up a gap of possibility for different forms of identification that are only available to safely explore due to the steady maintenance of heterosexuality.

The word “twilight” refers to an ambiguous time of day that takes place at the time when day turns to night. In *The Twilight Saga*, this time of day is meaningful because the characters Bella Swan and Edward Cullen have a significant moment that they experience during twilight. This is not, however, the only way that the word “twilight” has meaning within *The Twilight Saga* and other modern vampire fiction. *The Twilight Saga* and the modern vampire trend in general contain themes about blurry lines, hybridity, and ambiguity. Not only is Edward’s and Bella’s relationship complicated because Edward is a vampire and Bella is a human, Edward is constantly conflicted by his ambiguous existence as a vegetarian vampire who resists his true desires and instead settles for a life of discontent and sexual abstinence. The word “twilight” can also apply to *The Twilight Saga*’s stance on animals and humans, which implies that the vampire characters are beings that exist somewhere between becoming-animal and becoming-human, constantly oscillating between the two existences. Ultimately, it is the vampires’ choice to be closer to humanity that spurs their decision to become vegetarian vampires that, as a result, allow them to successfully blend in with the human population. The word “twilight” reflects the ambiguity of *The Twilight Saga* and modern vampires and will continue to be evident throughout this exploration of vampires, humans, animals, and hybrids.

Modern vampire fiction is an assemblage of becoming and hybridity. Despite Edward’s warnings to Bella about his murderous nature, her desire for him does not

wane. Patricia MacCormack explains, “The vampire is a rare monster in that the victim’s desire compels them toward a welcome and ecstatic death, an active victim open to infection.”¹⁰⁵ Bella is a willing and active victim whose desire is more powerful than her fear of death. MacCormack continues, “The victim seeks the transformation and proliferation of the desiring self.”¹⁰⁶ Bella’s desire proliferates through a relationship with Edward, despite the risk of death. Similarly, the often turbulent relationship between Edward and Bella is largely the focus of *The Twilight Saga* and the reason for so many excessive fanatics. As the desire between Edward and Bella proliferates, so does it grow among Twihards for modern vampire fiction. Their hybrid relationship is provocative due to its hybridity but it is at the same time resolved by the heterosexual nature of their relationship.

Modern vampire fiction functions as an assemblage of hybridity as modern vampires constitute hybridity in a multiplicity of ways. Patricia MacCormack explains, “Hybrids present an encounter of self as more than one. Hybrids frequently take the form of two entities involuted or collapsed into one form or event. Hybrids challenge the belief in unity, phya, and absolute differentiation of elements, species, things, and subjects.”¹⁰⁷ As discussed in chapter two, because modern vampires defy binaries and no longer belong to one particular category, they form hybrids that challenge borders and boundaries. Although, as MacCormack states, “Hybrids are frequently encountered as ‘monsters,’”¹⁰⁸ modern vampires demonstrate that their particular hybrids are not monstrous and actually eliminate elements of monstrosity that would have existed

¹⁰⁵ MacCormack, p. 142.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 142.

¹⁰⁷ Patricia MacCormack, “Unnatural Alliances,” *Deleuze and Queer Theory*, eds. Chrysanthi Nigianni and Merl Storr, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd, 2009), p. 136.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 136.

otherwise. In other words, although vampires were once widely considered monsters, modern vampires are no longer monstrous because they have become hybrids rather than strict instances of monsters or evil. Although hybrids are often considered to be monstrous, these hybrid modern vampires actually deflect monstrosity.

Hybrids function as a way to manage ambiguity and the tension caused by ambiguity. Hybrids constantly redefine ambiguity and represent the materialization of ambiguity and contradiction. As a result of hybrids, we are able to make ambiguity tolerable and livable while simultaneously living with ambiguities without recognizing them as such. Bruno Latour explains, “Those who think the most about hybrids circumscribe them as much as possible, whereas those who choose to ignore them by insulating them from any dangerous consequences develop them to the utmost.”¹⁰⁹ The hybridities of modern vampires appear at the forefront of modern vampire fiction, constantly addressed and negotiated. Because these hybrids are insulated by the maintenance of the heterosexual foundation, the existence of the hybrids are essentially discounted. There are no consequences to the hybrids because of the reinforcement of heterosexuality.

In his explanation of how we have never truly been modern, Latour writes, “How did the modern manage to specify and cancel out the work of mediation both at once? *By conceiving every hybrid as a mixture of two pure forms.*”¹¹⁰ As discussed in chapter two, the modern vampire is perceived specifically as mixtures of good/evil, human/monster, and human/animal. These hybrids are explicitly addressed and discussed in modern vampire fiction yet these mediations of binaries and boundaries are essentially canceled

¹⁰⁹ Latour, p. 41.

¹¹⁰ Latour, p. 78.

out by the upholding of other major binaries. Similarly to the ways in which Latour describes the modern as constituted, and perhaps a demonstration of how we have never been modern, the modern vampire specifies its multiplicity of hybrids and cancels them out all at once.

It is no secret that modern vampire fiction narratives are more often than not romantic. In every form of modern vampire fiction, the heterosexual union takes place. To name a few, Buffy and Angel and Buffy and Spike from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Angel*, Elena and Stefan and Elena and Damon in *The Vampire Diaries*, Sookie and Bill and Sookie and Eric in *True Blood*, and, of course, Edward and Bella in *The Twilight Saga*. Frequently, these stories involve a love triangle between two men and one woman, shifting the conflict of the heterosexual romance to the forefront of these stories. These unions typically involve a vampire male and a human female, which produces a hybrid relationship that is simultaneously recuperated by the heterosexual foundation of the hybrid. Thus the audience is presented with distressing binary breaking that can be addressed safely through the final restoration of the stable heterosexual union.

Before the audience is even aware of the main male character's vampirism, modern vampire narratives begin with the encounter between the male vampire and female human. Thus, from the very beginning of the narratives, modern vampire fiction is set up as a story about heterosexual romance. This is masked, however, by the hybridity of both the male vampire and the female human. As I have already discussed, the male vampire constitutes a multiplicity of hybrids; he is alive/dead, human/monster, human/animal. The female human love interest is also a hybrid, as there is always something special about her that results in the mutual attraction between the male

vampire and the human female. Bella is a hybrid of humanity and the supernatural; Edward is able to read all minds except for Bella's because she has a special ability to involuntarily protect her mind from intruders. Sookie Stackhouse is a hybrid of human and fairy, a rare race in the *True Blood* universe to which vampires are passionately attracted, and she can read all minds except for the minds of vampires. Elena Gilbert in *The Vampire Diaries* is a hybrid of the past and present; she is an ancient descendent of the vampire Katherine and also her doppelganger. As a result of these women's hybridities, the male vampires are attracted to them. The females are attracted to the vampires because, well, male vampires in modern vampire fiction are usually very attractive and mysterious. The heterosexuality of the male vampires and female humans are masked by the ways in which they are attracted to one other; they are attracted to each other because they are each hybrids. The heterosexual romances could not take place without the hybrids, yet the hybrids could not be resolved without the heterosexual romances.

The main characters are not the only heterosexuals involved in modern vampire fiction. Most of the minor characters are also known to be heterosexual. In *The Twilight Saga*, vampires essentially mate for life and every member of the Cullen family has a mate. These couples are almost always portrayed particularly on film as inseparable, frequently framed with the male vampire's arm around the female vampire. After James, an evil vampire, is murdered in *The Twilight Saga: New Moon*, his mate, Victoria, attempts to murder the entire Cullen family out of revenge for killing him. *True Blood* and *The Vampire Diaries* present a bit more nuance in their characters but still place heterosexuality at the forefront of both its leading and minor characters.

A vampire and a human relationship constitutes what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as an “unnatural alliance,”¹¹¹ which is defined by “desiring a relation with the power(s) of an irreducible other [that] alters dominant power structures through desire.”¹¹² Edward and Bella in *The Twilight Saga* and Stefan and Elena in *The Vampire Diaries* recognize their otherness to each other but continue to desire one another. One of the most popular quotes from *The Twilight Saga* involves Edward referring to himself as a lion and Bella as a lamb.¹¹³ This quote is so popular that it is not uncommon for fans to get it tattooed onto their bodies.¹¹⁴ It is important that this quote confronts the hybridity of Edward and Bella’s relationship, which consists of a human and a nonhuman. The paradigm of a relationship between a lion and a lamb implies danger and an imbalance of power. The analogous lion and lamb also function to provide hope for some kind of utopia in which, despite the unequal power relations, such a hybrid couple could exist successfully and happily in peace. This hybrid is immediately resolved through the heterosexual nature of the hybrid relationship between the male vampire and female human, or the lion and the lamb. It also reinforces gender norms, suggesting that the powerful lion constitutes the male in the relationship and the weak lamb as the female.

Heterosexuality is not the only foundation being reinforced. Binaries such as woman/man, passive/active, and stereotypical gender boundaries are also unchallenged. Because the women in modern vampire fiction are usually human and thus in contrast with their male vampire partners are quite powerless, the vampire/human hybrid is subverted by the upholding of the woman as passive and male as active binary. Stephenie

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 136.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 136.

¹¹³ *Twilight*, p. 274.

¹¹⁴ ReelzChannel Staff, “Wearing Their Devotion: ‘Twilight’ Tattoos,” *Reelz Channel*, n.d., <http://www.reelzchannel.com/article/763/wearing-their-devotion-twilight-tattoos>, (8 Nov. 2010), p. 1.

Meyer has attempted to refute this by claiming that she is not anti-woman, but anti-human.¹¹⁵ This, however, is the paradox of modern vampire fiction – that it can do everything without being limited by anything. Meyer’s assertion that *The Twilight Saga* is “anti-human” is correct, as modern vampire fiction is quite anti-human at first glance: hybrid vampires are presented as unique and interesting in comparison with the boring, average humans. This anti-humanness, however, can only occur through the upholding of the woman as passive and male as active binary. Meyer claims that she chose to write from a female perspective because she is a female, and that a reversal of a female vampire and a male human could easily occur. She is proven incorrect though through the multiplicities of other modern vampire fiction that all involve female humans and male vampires. If the situation was reversed, the woman as passive and male as active binary would no longer apply and the stabilization of the other binary transgressions would cease to occur. Thus the story would no longer make sense or feel comfortable and not many people would be interested in consuming it.

Whiteness is also largely left unchallenged. Most people of color within modern vampire fiction are relegated to the background or charged with stereotypes. The stories of modern vampires and the few humans involved with them are almost all white, especially the vampires. In *The Vampire Diaries*, one of the few people of color is a (human) witch named Bonnie, Elena’s best friend, who receives limited screen time and is almost always angry, negative, and occasionally sadistic. Even *True Blood*, which has been praised for its range of characters in terms of sexuality, class, and race,¹¹⁶ rarely

¹¹⁵ Stephenie Meyer, “The Story Behind the Writing of ‘New Moon,’” *stepheniemeyer.com*, http://www.stepheniemeyer.com/nm_thestory.html, (8 Nov. 2010), p. 1.

¹¹⁶ GLAAD, “Where we are on TV report: 2010-2011 season,” *glad.org*, 29 Sept. 2010, <http://www.glaad.org/tvreport10>, (7 Oct. 2010), p. 1.

depicts any vampires of color and the two protagonists, Bill (a vampire) and Sookie (a human), are both white and heterosexual. In *The Twilight Saga* films, the only vampire of color is an evil vampire. Aside from a few other exceptions, the only established characters who are people of color within *The Twilight Saga* are Native Americans who do live not in the same town as the other (white) main characters but on a reservation near it. Some of these Native Americans, known as the Quileutes, including a main character named Jacob, are also werewolves. This stereotypical connection of Native Americans as inherently close to animals and nature is also problematic. Caitlin Brown, a critic of *The Twilight Saga*, says, “The translucent beauty of Bella and Edward’s pale skin is lingered on obsessively and contrasted unfavorably to Jacob’s ‘russet’ appearance.”¹¹⁷ Although Jacob is briefly Bella’s pseudo-boyfriend, she quickly leaves him once she and Edward are reunited. White characters in modern vampire fiction are also largely middle- or upper-class. Attention is repeatedly drawn to the contrast between Jacob’s tiny, shambling house and Edward’s huge mansion. The “continued insistence that an extremity of whiteness is integral to beauty and superiority of character”¹¹⁸ in modern vampire fiction demonstrates the promotion of a hegemonic, heteronormative, white world in which people of color are second-class citizens. The vampire phenomenon is indicative of the level of white hegemony and heteronormativity that still permeates our world.

Binary-troubling, hybrids, and heterosexuality collide in the pivotal birth scene in the fourth and final book of *The Twilight Saga*, *Breaking Dawn* (2008). Throughout the first three books of *The Twilight Saga*, Bella has expressed her desire to become a

¹¹⁷ Caitlin Brown, “Feminism and the vampire novel,” *The F Word: Contemporary UK Feminism*, http://www.thefword.org.uk/features/2009/09/feminism_and_th, (4 Dec. 2009), p. 1.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

vampire. Her vampire partner, Edward, refuses to turn her for a multiplicity of reasons, namely that he wishes for her to have a normal, human life. Eventually they make a compromise: Bella will marry Edward per his request, they will subsequently have sex per her request, and then Edward will make her a vampire. As a result of their hybrid (hetero)sexual relations, Bella becomes pregnant with a half-vampire, half-human hybrid baby. Her vampire family initially believes this child to be a monster and they try to terminate it. Bella, however, with the assistance of Rosalie, another vampire who regrets that she was never able to become a mother, protect the child and prevent the abortion from occurring. This hybrid baby grows in Bella's womb at an alarming rate, deteriorating her health rapidly. Bella's baby is finally delivered safely, to the detriment of Bella's life. However, Bella's certain death is resolved when Edward injects her with the vampire venom that turns her into a vampire. Bella becomes a vampire, a mother, and a wife, and her life is complete.

Bella's birth scene is bloody and monstrous as she goes into labor and her hybrid baby causes her placenta to detach and her body to break down. When she suddenly goes into labor, the baby breaks her spine. Edward has to resort to using his indestructible vampire fangs to chew through Bella's abdomen in order to deliver the baby. While Bella lies on the operating table in labor, she is a multiplicity of hybrids. She herself is a hybrid as she is both giving life (to her hybrid baby) and dying, constituting both life and death in her body simultaneously. Her hybridity is at first resolved by the fact that this scene is a direct result of her heterosexual intercourse with Edward. When Bella loses consciousness and is seemingly near death, Edward begins the process that changes Bella

into a vampire. This solves her hybridity entirely. Once she is a vampire, she will exist eternally as a wife and mother.

Renesmee, the hybrid half-vampire half-human baby, is a healthy child. Even her name is the hybrid combination of Bella's mother's name (Renee) and Edward's vampire mother's name (Esme). She ages rapidly, needs to drink blood for sustenance, and has the ability to project her thoughts into other people's minds. Her hybridity, however, is resolved swiftly. In *The Twilight Saga*, werewolves have the ability to "imprint," which essentially means that once they find their soul mate, they are both "imprinted" on the other and identified as inseparable soul mates. Almost immediately after Renesmee is born, Jacob, a werewolf, imprints on her. In other words, Renesmee is declared heterosexual within minutes of her birth, ultimately resolving her hybridity.

The portion of *Breaking Dawn* that takes place during Bella's labor and the birth of Renesmee shifts to Jacob's point of view for the first time in the entire series. Not only does this eliminate Bella's perspective during such a pivotal point in her life, it shifts the focus from Bella to her previous love interest, Jacob. From Jacob's point of view, Bella is powerless and potentially giving birth to a monster. Jacob minimizes Bella into a weak, powerless love interest that he feels he must protect because he still loves her. Thus this particular strategy distances the audience from Bella's monstrous motherhood and hybridity as a mother of a hybrid and instead allows them to focus on a previous heterosexual love interest.

Critics have already noted the fact that Bella only becomes a vampire, which she has desired throughout all three of the first books in the series, once she becomes a wife

and mother, fulfilling her place within patriarchy.¹¹⁹ Simultaneously, the clear representation of Bella's heterosexuality and the continuation of heterosexuality will occur with her daughter. Bella finally becomes a vampire, her greatest desire, only after she has heterosexual intercourse and completes the transcendent goal of heterosexual sex – a baby. Her baby represents the culmination of all modern vampire fiction – the fulfillment of heterosexuality. The hybrid baby also demonstrates the paradox of modern vampire fiction, of the limitations that simultaneously occur with its progress.

For the remainder of *Breaking Dawn*, the Cullen vampire coven rallies to defend Renesmee as both vampires and werewolves threaten to kill her because of her believed monstrous hybridity. In the end, the Cullens successfully convince everyone that Renesmee deserves to live and that no vampire rules (such as turning a young child into a vampire) were broken. They convince everyone by repeatedly reminding the audience that Renesmee is the result of sexual relations between vampire Edward and human Bella; she is Bella and Edward's biological child. This is essentially the same goal of modern vampire fiction itself – to convince its audience of its hybridity and binary breaking, even while canceling it out all at once.

These hybrid expressions solved by heterosexuality are also evident in the media and fans. As I discussed in chapter one, young teenagers who enjoy the vampire trend are drinking blood or allowing their partners to drink their blood. In the article I cited, there was a subtle emphasis on the fact that these teenagers are heterosexual. One of the teens directly discussed is quoted as follows, “‘Having that thick, warm copper-tasting blood in my mouth is the best thing I can think of!’ wrote a teenager identified as ‘GothicGirl10’

¹¹⁹ Carmen D. Siering, “Talking Back to ‘Twilight,’” *Ms. Magazine*, Spring 2009, <http://www.msmagazine.com/spring2009/Twilight.asp>, (8 Nov. 2010), p. 1.

this year. ‘Sometimes my boyfriend lets me feed off him. I let him feed off me as well.’”¹²⁰ While the author of this article notes multiple websites with groups that discuss blood drinking and teenagers such as GothicGirl10, I do not think it is a coincidence that the author chose this particular quote that seemingly identifies the teen as female and having a boyfriend. The author also directly quotes a teenage male who admits to biting his girlfriend. The blurring of reality and fantasy into a hybrid that I discussed in chapter one is evident in this article but it is, like the modern vampire trend itself, recuperated through the supposed heterosexuality of the teens involved.

There is also the desire of so many *Twilight* fans for the two lead actors in the *Twilight* films to be involved in a relationship. The often avid hopes of fans for a romantic relationship between actors Edward Pattinson and Kristen Stewart confirm the necessity for heterosexuality to resolve modern vampire hybridity. If Pattinson and Stewart were involved in a romantic relationship in “real life,” not only would reality and fantasy collide, but their heterosexual union would resolve the confusion surrounding the real/fantasy hybrid.

The Team Edward or Team Jacob debate among female fans is also important. These opposing “teams” point to the love triangle in *The Twilight Saga* in which Bella must choose whether to be in a relationship with Edward or Jacob. Fans often align themselves with one character or the other as the man Bella should choose, despite the known outcome that Bella ends up with Edward. The fact that fans focus so much on the love triangle demonstrates the influential role that heterosexuality plays within modern vampire fiction. Both of these men would constitute hybrid relationships with Bella

¹²⁰ JoNel Aleccia, “Love bites: Teens, stop sucking each other’s blood or you’re grounded!” *The Body Odd* on msnbc.com, 24 Sept. 2010, <http://bodyodd.msnbc.msn.com/news/2010/09/23/5166992-love-bites-teens-stop-sucking-each-others-blood-or-youre-grounded>, (6 Oct. 2010), p. 1.

(Edward is a vampire, Jacob is a werewolf, Bella is human), but this hybridity is completely irrelevant as long as she is in a relationship with a man, period.

Marsha Sutton of the *San Diego News Network*, who has written about why she thinks *The Twilight Saga* holds so much appeal for young girls and adults, suggests that

apparently, we are smitten by stories of helpless women who are protected and rescued by handsome, powerful, mysterious men. And what does this say about all that independence and self-assurance that girls and women are supposed to have acquired 35 years after the women's liberation movement empowered us? Not much. Probably that there's still a part of us that wants — craves — a strong man to love us and keep us safe.¹²¹

While Sutton is wrong to imply that there is some part of all women that craves a strong man, she does point out the effect of modern vampire fiction: the reinforcement of heteronormativity and gender norms. The affect so many women experience with modern vampire fiction is accessed primarily through the heterosexual romance. Modern vampire fiction informs female consumers that they should want and need a protective male partner in order to correctly fulfill their roles as women and instructs them how to do so through female and male gender norms and heterosexuality. As the character of Bella has demonstrated, the correct fulfillment of these goals apparently results in eternal happiness.

For the Moviefone “Biggest ‘Twilight’ Fan” contest, *Twilight* fans were encouraged to submit videos to YouTube that depict exactly how big of a Twihard they are.¹²² As discussed in chapter one, Anita, also known as YouTube user no1fanpire, and her video gained recognition for her extreme fanaticism. In the video, she declares that

¹²¹ Marsha Sutton, “‘Twilight’ Helps Keep Adults in Step with Teen Culture,” *San Diego News Network*, 23 Nov. 2009, <http://www.sdn.com/sandiego/2009-11-23/education/education-commentary/twilight-helps-keep-adults-in-step-with-teen-culture>, (9 Nov. 2010), p. 1.

¹²² Moviefone Staff, “Moviefone’s Biggest ‘Twilight’ Fan Search: Submit Your Video!” *Moviefone*, 8 Nov. 2010, <http://blog.moviefone.com/2010/11/08/biggest-twilight-fan-search/>, (8 Nov. 2010), p. 1.

The Twilight Saga is “the reason for [my] existence.”¹²³ During this video, she is dressed in a white dress with a white veil – like a bride. While Anita participates in binary confusion, merging reality and fantasy, she takes a page from *The Twilight Saga* itself and solves her ambiguities with a symbol of heterosexuality – marriage. The image of Anita in her wedding apparel, surrounded by life size cut outs of the film cast and *Twilight* posters on her walls, is quite affective. Anita never addresses her costume or why she chose to dress like a bride because she behaves just like modern vampire fiction; while all of the hybrids and binary blurring are occurring, heterosexuality is the constant foundation that stabilizes the entire assemblage. Although Anita does not necessarily represent all *Twilight* fans with her extreme fandom, she does demonstrate the affective response that has occurred and will continue to occur, that of intense devotion that is a result of the opportunities to trouble borders safely while maintaining the foundation of heterosexuality.

Modern vampire fiction is not just consumed by young teenage girls; adult women are also deeply involved. There is a successful website with 34,000 registered members, entitled TwilightMoms, that appeals specifically to the adult female readers.¹²⁴ On the “History” page of the TwilightMoms website, founder Lisa explains that this is a place to gather for moms who feel guilty about neglecting their housework, children, and husbands while being engrossed in *The Twilight Saga*.¹²⁵ When asked what it is about Edward that appeals to adult women, a “Twilight mom” said, “He’s gentlemanly and

¹²³ No1fanpire, “Biggest Twilight Fan,” *YouTube*, 11 Nov. 2010, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JMhWT177SAM&feature=player_embedded, (15 Nov. 2010).

¹²⁴ Em & Lo, “‘Twilight,’ Take Me Away! Teenage vampires and the mothers who love them,” *New York Magazine*, 15 Nov. 2009, <http://nymag.com/movies/features/62027/>, (4 Dec. 2009), p. 1.

¹²⁵ Lisa, “History,” twilightmoms.com, n.d., <http://www.twilightmoms.com/about-us/history/>, (8 Nov. 2010), p. 1.

caring and unattainable and mysterious all at the same time!”¹²⁶ Kirsten Starkweather, the editor of *TwilightMoms*, suggests that Bella’s domestic and maternal instincts and mature demeanor allow older women to identify with her.¹²⁷ These women are involved in a website specifically catered to mothers and wives and they identify with the ways in which Bella fulfills female gender stereotypes through her domesticity and motherhood. They identify most with the heterosexual romance of *The Twilight Saga* and even believe it has helped with their own (heterosexual) relationships. Modern vampire fiction presents a more interesting way of approaching heterosexual romance stories and though the affect these women experience from engaging with *The Twilight Saga* is partially due to its exploration of hybrids and binary breaking, they most clearly recall the heterosexual union and the reinforcement of gender norms.

In *The Twilight Saga*, Bella describes herself as ordinary and average: “I’m absolutely ordinary – well, except for bad things like all the near-death experiences and being so clumsy that I’m almost disabled.”¹²⁸ Furthermore, Bella is a “jeans and T-shirt kind of girl” who puts little investment into her appearance and femininity. Bella’s self-described ordinariness is meant to act as a familiar feeling of *Twilight*’s audience and to help these readers identify with her. One (female) reader said, “I’ve always felt plain and ordinary. And after seeing the way Edward saw Bella and felt about her, regardless of how she felt about herself, it kind of gave me more confidence in myself and my relationship.”¹²⁹ Modern vampire fiction is the ultimate heterosexual fantasy in which the rich, handsome, powerful man swoops in and sweeps the simple, poor, weak woman off

¹²⁶ Em & Lo, p. 1.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 1.

¹²⁸ Stephanie Meyer, *Twilight*, (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2005), p. 210.

¹²⁹ Em & Lo, p. 1.

her feet. This allows (heterosexual, female) fans to escape to this fantasy in which even the most ordinary, average girls get the perfect guy. While this seems to represent hope that all women, not just the women who fulfill patriarchy's rules of what men expect of them, can obtain an "Edward Cullen" of their own, this is simply not true. While many female characters in modern vampire fiction often see themselves and describe themselves as ordinary, they are not by a long shot. At the same time that they are describing themselves as "average," they are also revealed to be special in some way, as I have discussed previously. These female characters also tend to be beautiful, feminine, domestic, and maternal. This paradox allows women to identify with these female characters even as the ways in which they are described are essentially nothing but lies. However, the female audience would possibly not identify so much with these female characters if they were clearly described as gorgeous and perfect. Thus, once again, modern vampire fiction produces a contradiction that is integral to the phenomenon.

In a recent *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* episode entitled "Blood Moon" that I discussed in chapter one because it involves elements of reality and fantasy that are blurred together, heterosexuality is also at the forefront.¹³⁰ The victim and the suspects are shown to be involved in a wedding, the victim being the groom and the murderer his fiancée, who committed the murder because the groom had lied to her about his past. With the heterosexual relationship at the core of this episode that centers on modern vampire fiction, it is clear that even in secondary representations of modern vampire fiction, heterosexuality is the key element that cannot be left out.

The fact that modern vampire fictions are largely tales about romance is not a secret. The fact that these romances are appealing to many women is not surprising,

¹³⁰ "Blood Moon," *CSI: Crime Scene Investigations*, CBS, 7 Oct. 2010.

especially considering the ways in which modern vampire fiction is directly marketed toward women. What is somewhat surprising is that these formulaic tales about heterosexual romances have evolved into such a phenomenon. The narratives are always quite simple – boy and girl meet, they fall in love, they experience conflict, and then they reunite and live happily ever after. Yet, modern vampire narratives are complicated by hybrids and binary transgressions. Although these narratives achieve everything and nothing, they allow fans to explore heterosexual romance while simultaneously engaging with alternative forms of identification and binary blurring. One element could not exist without the other for this phenomenon to occur; heterosexual romance between vampires and humans could not exist without troubling borders which could also not exist if the romances were not heterosexual. Without all of these elements, this trend would not have caught on to the phenomenal level at which it currently sits.

Perhaps my most important point is that modern vampire fiction is not the first instance of this type of narrative; it is common to many different narratives that also engage with hybrids and binary troubling. For example, comic book superheroes such as Spider-man and his love interest Mary Jane or Superman and his romance with Lois Lane examine what it means to be human; both of these men are hybrids that are resolved through their heterosexual romances and altruism. In fact, modern vampires and their attempts to protect humans and use their supernatural powers altruistically make them resemble superheroes more than monsters. Also, many zombie fictions, which have grown significantly in popularity over the last several years, also utilize this narrative, troubling binaries of life/death and diseased/healthy through the zombies while the main characters often struggle to survive and fall into heterosexual relationships in the

meantime. The main difference between these examples and modern vampire fiction is that these aforementioned examples are often told from the male's point of view. The male is also usually the superhero. Conversely, modern vampire fiction is typically told from the female's point of view. This has allowed females to easily identify with modern vampire fiction while many males have quickly dismissed it as typical female romance stories. Unfortunately, while men who engage with these types of narratives through the examples I previously mentioned have the opportunities to identify with the male superhero, with modern vampire fiction women can only primarily engage with the female human, who in contrast with the male vampire is weak and passive. All of these narratives achieve similar goals – they allow their audiences to engage with new forms of identification and trouble binaries while stabilizing the narrative by retaining stereotypical gender roles and heterosexuality. Yet they accomplish different things during their execution. Men are able to immerse themselves in tales about male superheroes while women are forced to identify with weak, passive women who are also often maternal and domestic. This often causes modern vampire fiction to automatically be categorized as passionate romance tales for women.

This is, of course, not to say that women do not receive any agency from modern vampire fiction, or that no women identify with male superheroes or stories about male superheroes. My point is that although modern vampire fiction has quite a bit in common with other narratives that engage with similar themes, it is relegated to the category of “female romance fiction” and female fans are subsequently depicted in the media as hysterical and excessive. These fans seem to immerse themselves most in the heterosexual romance portion of modern vampire fiction which only reinforces the

media's and others' distaste for it, all while the heterosexuality of modern vampire fiction is also the key to stabilizing the genre. In her article in *The Guardian* entitled "Leave Twilight fans alone!," Mathilda Gregory writes, "Has there ever been a franchise whose fan base has been so maligned? It's starting to feel like some of the male critics of *Twilight* are just uneasy that, for once, something that isn't aimed at them is getting such a big slice of the zeitgeist."¹³¹ In fact, many men have expressed fear and anger in response to the modern vampire phenomenon. One man fears that "the average guy will be forgotten"¹³² in light of the many women who are now aspiring to have their own "Edward Cullens." There is even a YouTube series entitled "7 Lessons Guys Can Learn From Edward Cullen," in which men are given instructions on how to be "irresistible to women."¹³³ One man asks, "How would girls feel if guys held them to Hayden Panettiere standards?"¹³⁴ Gregory suggests that men are reacting this way because *The Twilight Saga* allows women to engage with the female gaze and a female protagonist whom "they can identify with and who isn't there just to be eye-candy for the guys."¹³⁵ While it is dangerous to suggest that women identify more with a female protagonist simply because she is a female, Gregory does have a point. Modern vampire fiction allows women to engage with narratives that were previously directly mainly toward males, such as tales of (male) superheroes. Unfortunately, this is not without a price. Instead of shifting the female protagonist to the superhero, she is kept in the same role as a passive, weak,

¹³¹ Mathilda Gregory, "Leave 'Twilight' Fans Alone!" *The Guardian*, guardian.co.uk, 17 July 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/jul/17/leave-twilight-fans-alone>, (23 Nov. 2010), p. 1.

¹³² Keith Zirkle, "Dear Bella and 'Twilight' Fans," *The Breeze*, 3 Dec. 2009, <http://breezejmu.org/2009/12/03/dear-bella-and-twilight-fans/>, (4 Dec. 2009), p. 1.

¹³³ "7 Lessons Guys Can Learn From Edward Cullen," *YouTube*, 29 July 2008, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A6d5YLGgYtM>, (4 Dec. 2009).

¹³⁴ Zirkle, p.1.

¹³⁵ Gregory, p. 1.

powerless character that must rely on the male superhero for protection and rescuing. She also must be a heterosexual who subscribes to traditional female gender roles such as wife, mother, and domestic. Perhaps when modern vampire fiction allows a powerful female to be the protagonist we can then engage with the same optimism Gregory has for *The Twilight Saga*.

All of the tensions in the modern vampire assemblage discussed in chapters one and two, from the confusion of real and fantasy to the breaking of binaries such as human/animal, human/monster, and good/evil, are resolved by putting heterosexuality at the center of the narratives. Whiteness and traditional gender binaries such as woman as passive and male as active are also left unchallenged and ultimately contribute to making heterosexuality the most important element of modern vampire fiction. Simultaneously, modern vampire fiction appears provocative and even progressive, allowing fans to access new forms of identification that break binaries and present hybrids positively rather than monstrosly. This, however, is problematic because it is only able to occur through the recuperation of heterosexuality. Without heterosexuality, modern vampire fiction would not have reached the phenomenal level at which it currently sits. Women are attracted to modern vampires because they present opportunities to explore hybrid identities safely through the reaffirming of heterosexuality and gender binaries. Modern vampire fiction allows so much to occur while so little is actually occurring.

CONCLUSION

The modern vampire phenomenon is important because of the impact it has made in popular culture. Modern vampires are an assemblage of the media, popular culture, and fanatics. Modern vampire representations are available in books, films, television shows, graphic novels, merchandise, and even parodies now. The fans mainly consist of women in the Western world who are attracted to the ways in which modern vampires explore alternative identities that they simultaneously resolve through heterosexuality, whiteness, and stereotypical gender roles. All of the tensions in the assemblage created through the hybrids and border troubling are recuperated through the foundation of heterosexuality.

Modern vampire fans blur reality and fantasy through their attempts to make modern vampires a reality because modern vampire fiction represents a safe world in which the audience is able to interact with hybrid spaces only because these hybrids are resolved by the maintenance of heterosexuality. Because of the reinforcement of heterosexuality, fans are able to safely engage with alternative forms of identification that are available only because modern vampires are constantly transgressing important binaries such as human/nonhuman, living/dead, and good/evil.

Even as modern vampires attempt to distinguish themselves from animals and monsters, which they perceive as bad because of their supposed lack of control, they only confuse their boundaries more. Through their vegetarian lifestyles, modern vampires are shown to have access to humanity, which places them in the “good” category. However, because modern vampires are constantly at risk of becoming-animal or becoming-

monster, they demonstrate the unstable nature of these binaries and become a multiplicity of hybrids.

The modern vampire phenomenon has opened up a space in which fans can problematize binaries safely while heterosexuality, rigid gender roles, and whiteness are left unchallenged. Fans are able to engage with new forms of personhood, humanness, and monstrosity that are provocative yet relegated to the background as the heterosexual romance takes the forefront of modern vampire narratives. The affect that is experienced by fans as a result of these elements is particularly fanatic, causing them to desperately desire that the modern vampire fantasy is a reality and leading them to take some fairly dramatic steps toward making it so.

The contradictions evident in modern vampire fiction are absolutely essential to the phenomenon. Without them, there is no way the modern vampire phenomenon could have truly taken place. The ways in which the contradictions are constructed allows them to exist in perfect harmony, each guaranteeing the other element to exist while at the same time contradicting it. Without this balance, the modern vampire phenomenon could not induce such fanatical affect that has caused this trend to be so important to popular culture at this historical moment.

It is important to examine popular culture phenomena such as modern vampires because popular culture often acts as a kind of barometer for particular historical moments. The modern vampire phenomenon demonstrates that although many people are interested in exploring alternative forms and spaces of identifications through hybrids and disturbed binaries, a large proportion of them would not yet be comfortable doing so without some kind of safety net, which in the case of the modern vampire phenomenon is

heterosexuality. Perhaps this also shows how far we still have to go as a society before a female who does not fulfill rigid female norms can also be a heroine. The modern vampire phenomenon is indicative of the level of white hegemony and heteronormativity that still manage to dominate society.

The modern vampire trend shows no signs of waning anytime soon. There is potential for change, however. Lisi Harrison, an author of several young adult book series, published the first book in the *Monster High* book series in September of 2010, which focuses on supernatural young women such as the invented daughter of Frankenstein, a young vampire, a werewolf, and more. This is not without problems, as this book series is based on Mattel's Monster High dolls, which are monstrous dolls dressed provocatively, but it does offer a shift in the modern vampire and monster trend. These books and the dolls are focused on the supernatural young girls, rather than their (heterosexual) love interests. While these characters tend to be focused on many stereotypical teenage girl issues such as appearance, clothes, makeup, boys, and shopping, they still offer young girls a perspective from the powerful and supernatural point of view. These girls also constitute a variety of colors – one of the girls is African American, one is Egyptian, one has green skin, one has blue skin, etc. *Monster High* explores how these girls see themselves as unique and abnormal as they struggle to fit in with the “normies,” or normal people, as they call them. Once again, however, these stories would not be possible without the reinforcement of the female gender role and heterosexuality.

This is not to say that stories about female superheroes told from their point of view do not exist, only that they are not as common. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* portrayed

a superhero female main character that was largely told from her point of view. She herself was a hybrid as a slayer/“normal” girl and she actively disturbed binaries and engaged in a multiplicity of hybrid relationships and events. Even Buffy, however, was constantly restabilized by her complicated male love interests. However, in light of Warner Bros.’ recent announcement that it would be rebooting *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* through a brand new film,¹³⁶ there has been some discussion over the lack of female superheroes or even just powerful human females on screens lately. Perhaps the modern vampire phenomenon is a symptom or even a cause of this lack of powerful female characters through its particular proliferation of rigid gender roles and heterosexuality. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* went off the air in 2003 and Charlie Jane Anders of the website io9 asks, “So what kind of female heroes have we gotten after Buffy? It hasn't been a particularly great time, at least on screen.”¹³⁷ Although stories about hybrids will probably not be separated from certain gender roles and heterosexuality anytime in the near future, but we can at least hope for a space in which female characters get a chance at being the superheroes, rather than the damsels in distress.

¹³⁶ Geoff Boucher, “Joss who? Meet the writer of the new ‘Buffy the Vampire Slayer’ film,” *Los Angeles Times*, 22 Nov. 2010, <http://herocomplex.latimes.com/2010/11/22/joss-who-meet-the-writer-of-the-new-buffy-the-vampire-slayer-film/>, (29 Nov. 2010).

¹³⁷ Charlie Jane Anders, “We need more vampire Slayers – not just more Buffy,” *io9*, 29 Nov. 2010, <http://io9.com/5700871/we-need-more-vampire-slayers--just-not-more-buffy>, (29 Nov. 2010).

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Curriculum Vitae

Jessica M. Landers

Education

- | | |
|--------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| May 2008 | Indiana University - Bloomington. B.A. in Gender Studies and Psychology (minor in human sexuality) |
| January 2011 | Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick. M.A. in Women's and Gender Studies |

Employment

- | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| May 2006-August 2008 | Client Services Representative, Office of Student Financial Assistance, Indiana University – Bloomington. |
| August 2008-February 2009 | Financial Aid Representative, The Art Institute of Ohio-Cincinnati. |
| April 2009-Present | Assistant to the Director of Carol Wright Catalog, Dr. Leonard's Healthcare Corp., Edison, NJ. |